

# Features of pre-university training and university studies for foreigners at the Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv

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## ABSTRACT

The article focuses on the peculiarities of pre-university training of foreign students who wish to enter the faculties of Kyiv University with Ukrainian or English language of instruction. The issue of selection of disciplines of humanities, engineering-technical and medical-biological directions of education is clarified. The study identifies certain problems and challenges that arise during the study of foreign students, ways to overcome them, as well as prospects for the development of educational and scientific potential of foreigners who become full students after graduating from the Preparatory Department for Foreign Citizens at Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv. The main faculties and institutes that are mostly popular among foreigners in Ukraine are listed. A separate issue for research is to study the positive impact of extracurricular activities with foreigners in order to accelerate their social and cultural adaptation.

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## KEYWORDS

preparatory department, pre-university training, socio-cultural adaptation

Educational and scientific activities are actively carried out on the basis of universities, which have long occupied leading positions in international rankings with the recognition of educational services provided at a high level according to certain criteria. One of the key areas of work, in particular the Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv (Ukraine), is the establishment of international relations for mutual exchange of professional experience, both for students and teachers of the university. Currently, the University has two departments that are actively looking for new perspectives in the field of education and science: the Department of International Relations and the Department of Academic Mobil-

ity. For example, students at the University of Kyiv participate in competitive selections for academic mobility programs and receive the opportunity to study or train abroad. Of course, this is an important step to understand the peculiarities of intercultural relations and the acquisition of professional skills in the specialty in the relevant public research and educational institutions abroad.

Recently, in the context of globalisation of the educational process, the issues of socio-cultural adaptation, gaining foreign professional experience, expanding the cultural worldview, establishing intercultural relations are increasingly attracting the attention of Ukrainian scholars. It seems important to us to find out what we mean by 'intercultural relations'.

The interaction of cultures is a special kind of direct relations and connections established between two or more cultures, as well as those influences, mutual changes which are manifested in the course of these relations.

The change of states, qualities, spheres of activity, values of this or that culture, generation of new forms of cultural activity, spiritual landmarks and signs of a way of life of people under the influence of external impulses acquires crucial value in processes of interaction of cultures. The process of interaction of cultures, as a rule, is a long-term phenomenon (at least a few decades).

The Preparatory Department for Foreign Citizens is the official structural subdivision of the Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv. Its activities are related to the provision of qualified pre-university training to foreigners from different countries in certain disciplines before entering the relevant faculty of the University of Kiev. This department is the reverse side of establishing intercultural relations of Ukrainian higher education with foreign partners. It is also a unique opportunity for future foreign students to once again improve their knowledge and try to study abroad, especially if they successfully pass the exams in their country to the dream university.

Prior to the worldwide pandemic, the Preparatory Department for Foreign Citizens was celebrated and is now characterised by certain organisational conditions. Thus, an average of 1,186 students from 44 countries study here, including 57 graduate students, 13 interns and 180 students (from 24 countries). The main contingent of students are representatives of the People's Republic of China, Turkey and Iran. The languages of instruction are Ukrainian, English and Russian. There are three divisions that ensure effective work with foreigners - the department of organisational issues, information and analytical department and the department of educational work of foreign citizens. As for the department for educational work of foreign citizens, it is one of the largest divisions of the Preparatory Department. He takes care of all foreign citizens studying at the University - students of the Pre-

paratory Department and foreign students of the main faculties. The competence of the department for educational work of foreign citizens, first of all, includes the organisation of the educational process and credit-examination sessions of pre-university training, the final exam in the language of instruction (Ukrainian, English, Russian). In addition, the schedule of classes at the Preparatory Department, the formation and change of academic groups, questionnaires for students about their future specialty, as well as the formation of academic groups in the future field of study (humanities, medical and biological, engineering, economic). Particular attention is paid to the management and processing of personal files of foreign students of the Preparatory Department and students of basic faculties, keeping records of absences and student performance, communication with students of the Preparatory Department on tuition and current issues, issuing certificates to students of the Preparatory Department and students of basic faculties. University. It should be noted that there is a constant control over the timely delivery and storage of exam papers, test and examination information, journals of current performance of students, timely completion of attestation of students, individual plans and reports of teachers. The process of forming orders on expulsion of students of the Preparatory Department and issuance of certificates of completion of the Preparatory Department is also underway.

If we turn to the peculiarities of the curriculum, we should note that the training can last 1 year (10 months) or 8 months. Subject to pre-university training lasting 1 year, the study period is divided into 2 semesters (18 + 18 weeks). The total number of classrooms covers 1,080 hours, and 720 hours are devoted to independent work, a total of 1,800 hours. If we are talking about training for 8 months, the study period is also divided into 2 semesters (15 and 16 weeks) and includes 930 classroom hours and 600 hours of independent work. That is, the total number of hours reaches 1530. The scientific and pedagogical staff of the Preparatory Department for Foreign Citizens is attached to the relevant section: Ukrainian language, Russian language, English language or special disciplines. The activities of the sections are aimed at providing the educational process for students of the Preparatory Department to study Ukrainian, Russian, English and general disciplines. The responsibilities of teachers include the development of working curricula, writing textbooks, manuals, exam materials, etc. In addition, teachers take an active part in ensuring the educational process in the Summer Language School on the basis of the Preparatory Department.

Of particular interest to the activities of teachers may be related to their scientific and methodological work, organisation of international, national scientific and practical conferences, seminars on the development of educational

and methodological base of pre-university training, improvement of teaching methods for foreign citizens and more. Of course, teachers of the Preparatory Department are constantly involved in the exchange of experience between similar educational institutions in Ukraine and abroad and improve their skills by participating in research internships. Another component that is within the competence of teachers is the development of materials in Ukrainian, English and Russian for entrance examinations for ED ‘Bachelor and ED ‘Master’ (\*ED – Educational Degree).

**Table 1.1. Distribution of groups by areas of 2018/2019 academic year**

Humanitarian	Economic	Medical and biological	Engineering and technical
52%	5%	29%	14%

**Table 1.2. Distribution of classroom hours in the school year (specialisation: Humanities)**

Ukrainian language	Annotated reading	Literature	History of Ukraine	Geography	Ukrainian studies
71%	6%	8%	6%	6%	3%
780 hours	60 hours	90 hours	60 hours	60 hours	30 hours

**Table 1.3. Distribution of classroom hours in the school year (specialisation: economy)**

Ukrainian language	Annotated reading	Basics of economics	Maths	Geography	Ukrainian studies
67%	6%	8%	8%	8%	3%
720 hours	60 hours	90 hours	90 hours	90 hours	30 hours

**Table 1.4. Distribution of classroom hours in the school year (specialisation: medicine and biology)**

Ukrainian language	Annotated reading	Biology	Chemistry	Physics	Ukrainian studies
67%	6%	8%	8%	8%	3%
720 hours	60 hours	90 hours	90 hours	90 hours	30 hours

**Table 1.5. Distribution of classroom hours in the school year (specialisation: STEM)**

Ukrainian language	Annotated reading	Maths	Physics	Engineering graphics	Ukrainian studies	Chemistry
66%	6%	8%	8%	6%	3%	3%
720 hours	60 hours	90 hours	90 hours	60 hours	30 hours	30 hours

**Table 1.6. Distribution of classroom hours in English-speaking groups (specialisation: Humanities)**

English	Ukrainian language	Annotated reading	History of Ukraine	Geography	Ukrainian studies
66%	14%	6%	8%	3%	3%
720 hours	150 hours	60 hours	90 hours	30 hours	30 hours

**Table 1.7. Distribution of classroom hours in Russian-speaking groups (specialisation: Humanities)**

Russian language	Annotated reading	Ukrainian language	Literature	Geography	Ukrainian studies	History of Ukraine
60%	6%	11%	8%	6%	3%	6%
660 hours	60 hours	120 hours	90 hours	60 hours	30 hours	60 hours

Every year the methodical department works on the improvement of educational programs and carries out search of new technologies of training. For example, in the last academic year (2020–2021) the cycle of humanities disciplines was changed: the general course ‘Fundamentals of Ukrainian and foreign literature’ was divided according to the program into courses ‘Fundamentals of Ukrainian and world literature’ for groups with Ukrainian and Russian language of instruction, as well as the course ‘World Literature’ in groups with English language of instruction.

In addition, the number of hours devoted to the study of General English was divided between two areas, taking into account the future professional component: ‘General English’ and ‘English for Professional Purposes’ (humanities and medical and biological areas). With the emergence of the modern challenge of combating the pandemic and the transfer of education online, the University has organised a course of webinars to improve the professional skills of research and teaching staff. Upon successful completion of the test after the webinar

course, research and teaching staff had the opportunity to obtain a certificate. As the Preparatory Department for Foreign Citizens is an educational unit of the University of Kyiv, active educational, scientific and extracurricular work is carried out here with the aim of socio-cultural adaptation. For several years in a row, the International Scientific Conference for Foreign Students (Students) has been held, during which several foreign students are attached to the scientific and pedagogical employee of the department as a scientific supervisor. They prepare a report in the form of a presentation about the cultural and educational features of their country or Ukraine. In the spring of 2021, the International Conference for Teachers Teaching Various Disciplines to International Students was established. Both teachers of preparatory departments and teachers from faculties and institutes are invited to participate in the conference to exchange professional experience.

The specific of extracurricular work is the attachment to each group of the main teacher-curator, who with the support of the leadership of the Preparatory Department for Foreign Citizens acquaints foreigners with the cultural life of Ukraine. These can be visits to museums, art exhibitions, architectural monuments, theatres, creative meetings with famous people, cultural and educational events at faculties and institutes, to which, of course, foreigners are invited.

All this contributes to the rapid and high-quality adaptation of a different mentality to the living conditions in the Slavic country. After completing pre-university training, students successfully enter the faculties of Kyiv National University after overcoming the challenges that arise immediately after arriving in Ukraine: intercultural conflicts; features of daily routine of foreign students and Ukrainian timetable; language adaptation; accommodation; psychological problems; studying motivation; methodological base; online studying. One of the most popular institutes to go on studying for foreign students is the Scientific and Educational Institute of Philology at Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv. The main department for getting a specialisation is the Department of Ukrainian and Russian as foreign languages and programs in English for studying more than two foreign languages.

Thus, the education of foreigners is a really difficult process that requires professionalism and certain character traits of a research and teaching staff. Of course, conducting educational activities in groups with foreign students can cause more unexpected moments than with their Ukrainian students, but with experience, such delicate moments can be resolved as quickly as possible. In terms of research, it seems interesting in the future to pay attention to the following aspects: social and cultural adaptation in the European countries; intercul-

tural communication; dialogue of different cultures; perception of knowledge in foreign language; mutual understanding and interaction; attraction as a cultural definition; attribution as a cultural definition; emotional Intelligence of foreign students.

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