



Education Policy

Introduction

The Linacre Institute is a small educational charity based in the North of England. It was founded in 2014 and has supported over 300 students on their journeys from A-Level to university. Our mission is to give Northern state-school students the confidence to apply to our leading universities and the skills to thrive there. Our programme relies on the support of hundreds of wonderful individuals who contribute through sharing their expertise, giving up their time or donating to the programme. All these people make Reach Higher what it is: expert, long-term, personal, nurturing, and rooted in a community of academic curiosity.

Research with schools has identified three key areas which the Reach Higher programme develops in our students:

Breadth In an increasingly interconnected and rapidly changing world, having a broad knowledge base will be essential for tackling future challenges. Within subject disciplines, many university courses require a broader understanding of subject areas than the material covered in A-level syllabuses: by delving into additional material, students can better prepare themselves for the demands of higher education. Beyond their subjects, the Reach Higher programme prepares students for an interdisciplinary world beyond university where much of the most innovative research, and businesses, work across traditional subject boundaries.

Depth It remains the case that subject-specific knowledge and skills form the bedrock of an academic education. The Reach Higher programme provides opportunities for students to delve deeper than their A-Level studies in small groups, led by subject experts. Students develop an understanding of the foundations of their subjects, with time given to exploration and discussion without the limitations often imposed in a tightly constrained school environment. By building depth of understanding students will be better prepared for university and better able to score highly in their examinations, as

well as enhancing their critical thinking skills and ability to analyse complex problems

Communication One of the greatest disconnects between the assessment framework for sixth form students and the skills required for university (and beyond) is in the area of communication and collaboration. Whether this is academics presenting their findings to their peers or entrepreneurs pitching their ideas to investors, in the modern world the quality of your ideas means nothing without the means to communicate them. The Reach Higher programme develops students' communication skills in a wide variety of ways to prepare students to thrive at university and in the modern workplace.

By developing students in these three areas, the Reach Higher programme prepares our participants for entry into university and life beyond. In addition to developing these general skills, the Reach Higher programme also supports students directly with their applications to university by helping with UCAS applications and personal statements, as well as with entry test preparation and interview practice if applicable.

By developing these core skills and supporting students in their applications, the Reach Higher programme supports our students to apply successfully to our leading universities and thrive there.

Focus

As students progress through the programme, the emphasis changes. At the start of the programme, the focus is on breadth and exploring interests. As the programme progresses, students go into their subjects in more depth, and there is more targeted university preparation. Communication skills run through the programme.

	Big ideas	Stepping stones	Phone a friend	Refine to shine
Breadth				
Depth				
Communication				
University applications				

Big Ideas (early July)

Workshops

The first formal part of the Reach Higher programme is Big Ideas, held in mid-July. This online programme consists of a number of workshops which aim to stretch the students' knowledge and understanding beyond the A-Level syllabus. The sessions are multidisciplinary in nature, exposing students to some of the most cutting edge and innovative ideas across a range of fields. Although students indicate their current subject focus and are each given an individual timetable, the programme is designed to develop breadth, so a medic may be learning about the design of experiments, or an architecture student learning about archaeoastronomy, for example

The workshops are delivered as online seminars by experts in their field and encourage students to engage in discussion and contribute to the experience. Students are challenged to think on their feet about a wide range of ideas they have not encountered before and work together with peers on the programme who they may or may not know from school. This begins to break down barriers between the students and develop their skills in discussing new ideas which will be developed further during the Stepping Stones residential.

Research and academic poster

In addition to the workshops, the Big Ideas programme includes students carrying out individual research into a complex or important idea in their subject of interest and creating an academic poster to present that subject to their peers. Students choose their own topic, based on the criteria that the topic must be based on a 'Big Idea', that is a topic which:

- has a wide reach across traditional subject divides,
- involves concepts and/or knowledge which is beyond their A level syllabus, • is important due to its impact on the way we understand the world or the way we live our lives.

Examples from previous cohorts include: *How perpetual motion machines break physics*; *The interaction of genes with our environment*; and *How were women of the Trojan war truly perceived?*

Those research posters chosen as finalists are printed and presented by students at the

Stepping Stones residential in the summer.

Stepping Stones (mid August)

The Stepping Stones residential in St John's College, Cambridge is at the heart of the Reach Higher programme. Students spend four days studying with subject experts, going deeply into their subjects and enjoying a range of activities around the city.

Tutorials

The central part of students' time in Cambridge will be working with their tutor in small groups. These tutorials are discursive environments and students will be expected to contribute to discussions about new ideas in their subjects. The exact programme will vary, but it will commonly involve the tutor presenting some new idea or aspect of the subject, students having time to work on the material and discussions where students share their answers and ideas. Students will be challenged on their answers and encouraged to develop both their thinking and their oracy whilst being scrutinised in a supportive but rigorous manner. Students will also learn to respond to each other's ideas and become comfortable with the style of academic debate they will encounter at university.

The content and style of delivery of the tutorials will be led by the tutors. For university subjects which are taught at school this will usually involve going in to subjects in more depth and learning new content beyond the A level syllabus. For 'new' subjects, for example medicine, law and engineering, the tutorial programme will give the students a thorough understanding of what studying the subject involves at university and an introduction to some of the key content and ideas of that subject.

Where students are applying for subjects where some universities have entry tests or additional qualifications (e.g. STEP), the tutorial sessions will not be explicitly targeted at these tests, but they will develop the relevant skills needed for students to excel in these assessments.

Group project

Having carried out the individual research project as part of the Big Ideas programme, students in Stepping Stones will be challenged to work collaboratively on a project which will often include a presentation from their team to the rest of the group. The nature of this project will vary between subjects but will include the students managing their time effectively, apportioning work between team members and delivering the results of the

project to their peers.

Symposium

As well as the subject-specific sessions, there will be an opportunity for student finalists to spend time presenting their posters from Big Ideas to their peers. This provides an opportunity for students to share their successes and explain their passions to those who are studying different subjects.

Mentoring

In such an intense residential programme, it is important that students are supported and able to develop effective and positive work habits. Students are placed into cross-subject mentor groups and spend time at the end of each day reflecting on what they have learnt, what they have found challenging and how they have met that challenge. The Stepping Stones programme is a taste of life at the most challenging academic institutions and through the mentoring process students are given the knowledge and skills to look after themselves and be resilient in such environments.

Phone-a-Friend (late August onwards)

As the UCAS deadline approaches (whether early application or not), students are paired with a specialist tutor who will guide them through their application in detail.

Tutors will help students understand the nuances in applying for their subjects. They will guide them through choosing the universities to apply to, supporting students in understanding the differences between course options and universities. Through these discussions students will be supported to make the right choices for higher education and university life.

For those taking entry tests, specialist support will be in place to help these students prepare. This may include subject-specific support in aspects of the course they may not have covered, or may struggle with. Advice on practising questions and past papers will be available. For those students facing interviews, phone-a-friend tutors will support students in preparing for these.

Tutors will support students through the application process including reviewing personal statements at all stages from first drafting to final checking. After the group work and extension material of the earlier sessions this highly individual support ensures students are in the best place to gain places at their target universities.

Refine to Shine

Running alongside the targeted support from Phone-a-Friend is a series of webinars providing additional support on aspects of the university application process. These complement the individual Phone-a-Friend sessions by sharing skills which will be common for all students, for example working on personal statements, critical thinking skills for those taking relevant entry tests and subject-specific interview skills.

Training and quality assurance

At all stages in the process, those involved in delivering sessions for students are provided clear guidance and training on how to deliver these sessions. A programme of ongoing quality assurance is in place to maintain a high quality and ensure continual improvement.

Appendix 1: Big ideas sessions 2023

Title
Motion Capture & Portfolio Review
Studying Art Across Time & Cultures
How to Read a Painting
The Fundamentals of Visual Analysis
Echoes of Ovid: The Narcissus Myth and <i>Paradise Lost</i>
Introduction to Post-colonialism
An Introduction to Literary Theory
Dieu et Mon Droit: What Makes a Constitution?
Child Victims in the Criminal Justice System (<i>*Sensitive content</i>)
Contemporary Queerness in Literature and Society
Languages

The Transformative Nature of Literature
1816: The Year Without a Summer
An Exploration of the Sonnet
Literature in Translation
Translation as a Tool for Analysis
Why Study a Foreign Language?
Death Camps to Corbyn and Kanye: Why Do People Still Hate Jews?
Mock Parliamentary Debate
Was Leaving the EU the UK's Brexitiny?
How Do You Solve a Problem like North Korea?

An Introduction to Social Theory
How Differing Notions of Ethics Influence Optimal Economic Decision Making
Microplastics and the Environment
The Nutritional Value of Sauropod diet
The History of Political Thought
Genetic engineering in agriculture; threat, saviour - or neither?
J A Kemp Masterclass (Law)
Law and Morality
J A Kemp Masterclass (Biological Sciences)
Seeing is Believing: An Introduction to Structural Biology
Problem Solving in STEM

The Mathematics Behind Covid-19
The Geographies of Nature
Biological & Medical Sciences Workshop
Decolonial Approaches to the Biosciences
Forensic Psychology: Putting Our Justice System on Trial
Design of Experiments (DoE)
J A Kemp Masterclass (Chemistry)
Machine Learning in Engineering and Chemistry
Game Theory and Psychology
AI and Intellectual Property Law
The Euler-Lagrange Equation and Physics Beyond Newton
What does the Higgs do?

J A Kemp Masterclass (Physical Sciences)
Untangling Knot Theory
Choosing a Medical School and the Application Process
Medicine PBL Tutorials A, B, C
Medicine Tutorials A, B & C
Molecular discoveries for Mental Health Disorders
A Day in the Life of an Oxford Medical Student & Q&A
A Week in the Life of a Junior Doctor
BMAT 101

UCAT 101
ArchaeoAstronomy: The Study of the Stars and Stones
Dark Matter- the Work of Vera Rubin and the Discovery of Dark Matter