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Foundations of success: Former foundation year students on a health sciences course show equivalent module marks and degree completion rates to peers from more traditional entry routes

HELEN M. SPICER-CAIN
City St George's, University of London

This article considers success at undergraduate level study amongst former students of a foundation year in health sciences. Data from 50 former foundation year students, with respect to programme completion, academic marks and final degree classifications, was compared to that from 335 students who entered the same six undergraduate programmes via the UCAS main cycle and 74 who entered those courses via UCAS Clearing. Statistical analysis showed that former foundation year students were more likely than students from other entry routes to complete each year of their undergraduate programme, and they received equivalent marks to students from more traditional entry routes, including final degree marks. This is in contrast to recent government reports about undergraduate outcomes of former foundation year students, but in line with some other small studies investigating particular foundation years. The need for future research in this area is discussed, including recommendations for broader and larger cohort studies, alongside qualitative studies that will help us understand the success of former foundation students from their point of view.

Introduction

Provision of foundation years in the UK has undergone significant increases in the last decade, with the number of students entering foundation years tripling between 2012-13 and 2017-18 academic years (OfS, 2019), and finally reaching around 69,325 in 2021-22, eight times higher than a decade earlier (HEPI, 2024). There are now 123 higher education (HE) providers in the UK offering foundation year entry points in university courses (Law & Sheen, 2024), and these are particularly prevalent in London, the South East and East of England (HEPI, 2024). At the same time, government

reports have questioned whether foundation years are providing students with value for money (DfE, 2019). As foundation years continue to grow in number and cohort size, it is crucial for the sector to establish whether they are achieving their aims of supporting students to enter and complete undergraduate level study. However, overall, foundation years remain under-researched compared to other areas of UK HE (O'Sullivan et al, 2019).

Foundation years

A foundation year is typically a one-year course designed to prepare students for undergraduate level study, often at the same institution, bridging the gap between Further Education (FE) and HE and associated with widening participation in higher education for students from groups which may traditionally have been less well represented amongst entrants to HE (Policy Perspectives Network, 2021; DfE, 2023; HEPI, 2024). For many students, a foundation year is necessary because they have not attained the required grades or qualifications to enter an undergraduate course directly (DfE, 2023); 59% of foundation year students were found to hold Level 3 qualifications, as compared to a 98% average figure for undergraduate students overall (HEPI, 2024). However, some students choose a foundation year deliberately, in cases where they are not sure which undergraduate course they want to pursue, have been out of education for some time, are not sure if they want to undertake a full undergraduate course, or feel they need a more supportive start to their HE journey owing to neurodivergence, disability, mental health difficulties and/or personal circumstances (Policy Perspectives Network, 2021). In general, across the UK, foundation year students are more likely to be mature (aged 21 or over) than direct entry undergraduate students, and are also more likely to come from more economically deprived areas (HEPI, 2024). They may also have lower levels of parental education than the majority of undergraduate students (O'Sullivan et al, 2019). Foundation years appear to attract younger students than other entry routes to HE, such as Access Diplomas, and also to support a higher proportion of students who have non-white ethnicity (OfS, 2019; HEPI, 2024).

Foundation years take a range of different forms within UK higher education. They are offered across the breadth of subjects that may be studied at undergraduate level and vary in how specifically they link to the content of the undergraduate degree students eventually continue into. Around 6% of those students who engage in a foundation year study subjects allied to Medicine, with Business and Social Sciences being the most common foundation year subjects across England (HEPI, 2024). In addition to their subject, foundation years vary in their academic level, with some teaching at Level 3 (equivalent to A Level), some at Level 4 (equivalent to first year undergraduate level), and some considered to be the first part of a Level 6 undergraduate qualification (known as an 'integrated foundation year'). Foundation years also vary in terms of whether or not they provide students with a standalone qualification that can be used outside of their current university; those that are considered 'integrated foundation years' view the foundation year as part of the journey to a Level 6 undergraduate

degree within the institution and therefore do not provide specific qualifications from the foundation year alone, whereas other types of foundation year may lead to qualifications such as the Level 4 Certificate of Higher Education, which could be used to enter courses at other universities following completion of the foundation year. At present, there is limited information available categorising the foundation years offered within UK higher education in order to provide prevalence data on the various forms they may take.

Success in undergraduate study following a foundation year

In 2019, a government report showed that 79% of those who entered a foundation year course were found to progress successfully to undergraduate study within four years (OfS, 2019). However, it was noted that only 69% of those who progressed to degree level study completed a degree within four years of starting their studies, and 22% left higher education without completing a degree course. 64% of those who completed their undergraduate course attained a first or upper second class degree (OfS, 2019). More recent data from a similar report in 2024 showed the number of foundation year students who continued in higher education following a foundation year to be around 74% overall, although this was higher in some subjects, such as Medicine and Dentistry, where 88% continued to an undergraduate degree (HEPI, 2024). Although this paper is focused on the UK, similar concerns have been noted in foundation years in New Zealand, suggesting an issue that may affect this level of study internationally (Curtis et al, 2017). This means that there are many students completing foundation years and starting undergraduate education who are not then successful at degree level. This potentially calls into question the value of the foundation year for some students.

However, recent data shows that students with disabilities and those from disadvantaged areas perform similarly to their non-disabled and more economically advantaged peers in continuation after foundation years, which is positive (Black, 2023; HEPI, 2024). Additionally, information from staff who teach on foundation years indicates that they feel foundation years are highly important in supporting students to access HE, which is thought to indicate good value for money, where many would not previously have been able to access HE and the positive outcomes associated with a degree, and therefore may not have been able to work in particular professions (Clifford, 2018; DfE, 2023). However, it is important to consider more objectively whether foundation years are truly meeting the aspirations of those who work and study on them by allowing access to success at undergraduate level.

More specific research studies that address similar questions are limited; however, preliminary results are more positive. For example, Sanders and Daly (2013) found that for students across four foundation programmes at two different universities (including courses in science, health sciences and social sciences), marks at the end of their first year were similar to their direct entry peers. Additionally, Cobb and Onions (2018) found that 79.3% of students on a foundation year for a five-year degree course in

veterinary science progressed successfully to undergraduate study, of whom only 7.9% left before completing the five-year course, with only a third of these leaving without attaining a further academic qualification. This paper also researched the marks attained by students who had completed the foundation year, as compared to those who had entered the undergraduate course without a foundation year, and found no significant differences in first year marks. This may be in line with high continuation rates overall for students engaged in Veterinary Science courses (HEPI, 2024), and suggests that at least some foundation years may be successful in not only helping students reach undergraduate courses they would not otherwise have had the opportunity to enter, but also in supporting them to successfully complete these undergraduate programmes and attain similar marks to their peers who entered via more traditional routes. However, it remains to be established whether these results hold for a wide variety of foundation years across universities and subjects, and whether former foundation year students achieve similar marks to their non-foundation year peers in later years of their degrees. Additionally, it is not always made clear in these papers at what academic level the foundation course has been taught, and therefore how broadly applicable their results may be.

The present research therefore sought to address, within a single institution, questions related to the progression and degree-level attainment of former foundation year students, as compared to peers who entered undergraduate study via more traditional routes, including UCAS main cycle applicants and those who entered degree programmes via UCAS Clearing. Clearing is a process by which universities seek to fill places on their courses once A- Level results are released, and may be used by students who have not yet applied to university, who have changed their mind about their course, or those whose results are higher or lower than expected, changing their plans for university attendance (UCAS, 2024). Although, technically, these students enter university via UCAS, they have been considered in the analysis that follows as a separate group, to reflect that the students who enter via Clearing may have different characteristics from those who make UCAS applications earlier in the application cycle. Also, as it appears that the previous research which does exist outside of government reports has focused heavily on first year undergraduate outcomes of foundation year students, this paper aims to fill a gap by considering attainment beyond the first undergraduate year.

The foundation year under study

The foundation year under study is situated within a Health School in a city-based university. The majority of students commute to the university rather than living nearby in student accommodation. The foundation year is taught at Level 4, and at the end, students receive a Level 4 Certificate of Higher Education (CertHE) which they can use to enter other universities if they do not wish to stay within the institution, or are not offered a place on an undergraduate course within the institution. The entry requirements for the course are two C grades, or 64 UCAS tariff points, or MMP in BTEC, plus five GCSE passes at Grade 4/C or above, including English Language and

Mathematics. In comparison, the undergraduate Health programmes within the School typically require BBC or 112 UCAS tariff points for entry (BBB or 120 for Diagnostic Radiography, which also requires an A Level in Biology, Chemistry, Mathematics or Physics).

The foundation year programme is multiprofessional and now enrols a student cohort of around 120 students in each academic year. The cohort under study in the current paper were the pilot cohort that completed the foundation year in the 2019-2020 academic year, which was a smaller cohort consisting of 54 students at the start of the foundation year.

The foundation year consists of five modules that cover study skills, research methods, anatomy and physiology, personal and professional development (including NHS values, ethics, communication skills and reflective practice), and a module that introduces students to the various health professions that they may wish to enter in the future. Following successful completion of the CertHE with Merit or Distinction (attainment of a programme mark above 60%), students may enter an undergraduate course within the School, subject to a successful admissions interview. Entry routes are offered into undergraduate courses in Speech and Language Therapy, Adult, Child and Mental Health Nursing, and Diagnostic and Therapeutic Radiography.

The present study

This study sought to answer the following research questions for a cohort of students enrolled in a foundation year during the academic year 2019-2020, who completed their undergraduate studies in summer 2023:

1. Do former foundation year students successfully complete each academic year of their undergraduate course at the same rate as students who entered the undergraduate courses via UCAS (main cycle) and Clearing?
2. Do former foundation year students attain similar academic marks in each year of their undergraduate course to students who entered the undergraduate courses via UCAS and Clearing?
3. Do former foundation year students achieve similar degree classifications to students who entered the undergraduate courses via UCAS and Clearing?

Methods

Participants

This research study focused on the trajectory in undergraduate study of 50 students who entered the foundation year in September 2019, and then entered an undergraduate programme within the School of Health Science in September 2020. These students were mainly under 21 at the time of entry to the foundation programme, and the majority are of non-white ethnicity. This mirrors the general characteristics of the undergraduate population of the University, where 87.2% of students are aged 18-24 and 75.8% are of non-white ethnicity. The majority of foundation course students identify as female, despite women making up only 57.8% of the University's total undergraduate population.

For comparison, data was also sought from 335 students who entered the same six undergraduate courses (Speech and Language Therapy, Adult, Child and Mental Health Nursing, and Diagnostic and Therapeutic Radiography) in September 2020 following successful admission via UCAS, and 74 students who entered the same six courses in September 2020 via Clearing.

Ethical approval

Ethical approval for the study was granted from the City University of London, Department of Language and Communication Science Proportionate Review Ethics Committee. Anonymous data collected within the usual remit of teaching and assessment at the university was used for this study, with ethical approval, but without the need for consent, as no personal data was shared with the research team.

Measures

Data related to module marks for each module undertaken by each student was prepared for the research team by the Head of Student Services within the School in which the research was undertaken. Marks for each year of study were analysed in the autumn after the teaching year had concluded in the summer, to allow the processing of any within-year resit marks before analysis. These marks were used to calculate metrics related to completion of each year of study, and year average marks for each year of study, as described below.

'Successful completion' of a year of study was defined for the purposes of this project as having successfully completed and passed all module assessments associated with the relevant programme stage within the relevant academic year. It is therefore acknowledged that there may be students who successfully completed outstanding assessments, and therefore years of study, within subsequent academic years who are not included in these figures.

Analysis

For those students who were defined as 'successfully completing' the year, Year Average marks were calculated for each student based on the credit values of modules within their course which determine the proportion of marks each module contributes to the Year Average. Final Degree marks were then determined for each student based on the percentage contributed to the final mark by each year of their specific programme. Year Average and Final Degree marks could then be compared between students from different entry routes across programmes.

Statistical analyses were conducted using JASP software version 0.18.3.0. For RQ1, focused on completion, and RQ3, focused on degree class, chi-squared analyses were used to compare completion rates and final degree class across entry routes. For RQ2 and RQ3, equivalence testing using the TOST (Two One-Sided Tests) procedure was carried out in JASP, making three separate comparisons for each analysis (Foundation vs UCAS, Foundation vs Clearing, UCAS vs Clearing). A raw effect size of 10 marks, (a whole grade boundary, and a large Cohen's d effect size) was chosen as the Smallest Effect Size of Interest. This was to avoid finding significant differences between groups based on very small effect sizes of 2-3 marks, which are limited in their practical importance. Equivalence testing was chosen for this data as a better match for the research questions than standard inferential statistics, which tend to focus on group differences, rather than similarities.

Results

RQ1: Do former foundation students successfully complete each academic year of their undergraduate course at the same rate as students who entered the undergraduate courses via UCAS and Clearing?

In September 2020, 50/52 students who had completed the foundation year in the 2019-20 academic year entered undergraduate courses within the same university. In Summer 2021, 98.0% of the former foundation year cohort successfully completed the first year of their undergraduate programme (BSc1). This was compared to 85.7% of those who entered the same undergraduate degree courses via UCAS and 82.4% of those who entered via Clearing. Chi-squared analysis found a significant difference in completion rate according to entry route ($\chi^2(2)=6.905$, $p=0.032$), with former foundation year students being significantly more likely to demonstrate successful completion of their first undergraduate year than those who entered the courses via more traditional routes. The Cramer's V value was 0.123, indicating a small effect size for this association, despite its statistical significance. Standardised residuals indicate particular differences between observed and expected values for the foundation year entrants, showing that fewer foundation year entrants did not successfully complete BSc1 than would be expected.

In Summer 2022, 96.0% of the remaining former foundation year cohort successfully completed BSc2. This was compared to 76.4% of UCAS entrants and 72.2% of Clearing entrants engaged in the same programmes. Chi-squared analysis found a significant difference in completion rate according to entry route ($\chi^2(2)=11.307$, $p=0.004$), with former foundation year students being significantly more likely to demonstrate successful completion of their second undergraduate year than those who entered the courses via more traditional routes. The Cramer's V value was 0.158, indicating a small effect size for this association, despite its statistical significance. Standardised residuals indicate particular differences between observed and expected values for the foundation year entrants, showing that more foundation year entrants successfully completed BSc2, and fewer did not successfully complete BSc2, than would be expected.

In Summer 2023, 97.8% of the remaining former foundation year students completed BSc3 successfully, as compared to 87.4% of UCAS entrants and 81.0% of Clearing entrants. Chi-squared analysis found a statistically significant difference in completion rate according to entry route ($\chi^2(2)=6.798$, $p=0.033$), showing higher completion rates amongst former foundation year students than for other entry routes. The Cramer's V value was 0.139, indicating a small effect size for this association, despite its statistical significance. Standardised residuals showed large differences between observed and expected values for both foundation year entrants and Clearing entrants, with more foundation year entrants than expected, and fewer Clearing entrants than expected, successfully completing BSc3.

Former foundation year students were therefore more likely to successfully complete each year of their undergraduate programme than their peers who entered the same courses via UCAS and Clearing; however, the size of this effect was small. Ultimately, 92% of the 50 former foundation year students who progressed to undergraduate courses in September 2020 were successful in earning an undergraduate degree in Summer 2023.

RQ2: Do former foundation year students attain similar academic marks in each year of their undergraduate course to students who entered the undergraduate courses via UCAS and Clearing?

Year Average marks for students from each entry route in each academic year of undergraduate study are shown in Table 1 below.

Analysis of BSc1 Year Average marks for students who successfully completed this programme stage in Summer 2021 showed equivalence across all entry routes (Foundation vs UCAS, $p<0.001$; Foundation vs Clearing, $p<0.001$, UCAS vs Clearing, $p=0.011$).

Analysis of BSc2 Year Average marks for students who successfully completed this programme stage in Summer 2022 showed equivalence across all entry routes (all tests $p<0.001$).

Analysis of BSc3 Year Average marks for students who successfully completed this programme stage in Summer 2023 showed equivalence across all entry routes (Foundation vs UCAS, $p<0.001$; Foundation vs Clearing, $p=0.001$; UCAS vs Clearing, $p<0.001$).

	BSc1 Year Average (Mean (SD))	BSc2 Year Average (Mean (SD))	BSc3 Year Average (Mean (SD))
Foundation entrants	76.8 (7.7)	67.6 (7.9)	69.4 (7.8)
UCAS entrants	72.5 (9.1)	64.3 (8.5)	65.4 (8.4)
Clearing entrants	70.6 (9.6)	63.1 (8.9)	64.3 (7.5)

Table 1: Year Average Marks for each Academic Year of study by Entry Route

When Bonferroni corrections for multiple comparisons are applied, results of these equivalence tests remain significant.

RQ3: Do former foundation year students achieve similar degree classifications to students who entered the undergraduate courses via UCAS and Clearing?

Forty-six of the 50 former foundation year students went on to attain an undergraduate degree in Summer 2023. A further two students received a subject-specific Certificate of Higher Education at Level 4 as they completed their full first year of undergraduate study, and one student completed their second year of undergraduate study in Summer 2023, and was entering their final year at the time this data was analysed.

Table 2 below shows the mean degree qualifying marks for students from each entry route in Summer 2023. Equivalence was found for all entry routes (all $p<0.001$).

	Final Degree Qualifying Mark (Mean (SD))
Foundation Entrants	70.2 (7.1)
UCAS Entrants	66.7 (7.7)
Clearing Entrants	65.3 (7.0)

Table 2: Mean Final Degree Qualifying Marks for each entry route

Mean Final Degree Qualifying Marks for former foundation year students fell just within the first class honours range, whilst for UCAS and Clearing entrants, mean final marks fell within the higher part of the upper second class range.

The percentage of students in each entry route who attained degrees at each classification level is shown in Table 3 below.

	1st	2:1	2:2	3rd
Foundation entrants	57.8%	33.3%	8.9%	0.0%
UCAS entrants	36.6%	44.4%	18.1%	0.9%
Clearing entrants	25.5%	51.1%	23.4%	0.0%

Table 3: Percentage of students from each entry route achieving each degree classification

Chi squared analysis was used to determine whether there were differences according to entry route in the proportion of students achieving a 'good degree' (i.e. 1st or 2:1 classification). No significant differences were found ($\chi^2(2)=3.567$, $p=0.168$).

Discussion

Data from the first Health Sciences foundation cohort within this university from throughout their undergraduate journey was analysed in comparison to data from students who entered the same undergraduate courses within the same year via the more traditional entry routes of UCAS main cycle and UCAS Clearing. Overall, data show positive results, suggesting that the foundation year has been successful in supporting students to access and complete undergraduate education, and therefore has in some way created the 'foundations for success'.

Data addressing the first research question, related to completion of programme stages and eventual completion of an undergraduate degree, showed that the former foundation year students showed very high levels of successful completion of each year of study, and, in fact, were more likely to successfully complete each programme stage than peers who entered the same courses via UCAS and Clearing, although the magnitude of this effect was small. Ultimately, 92% of students from the former foundation cohort received an undergraduate degree three years after completion of their foundation course, and one further student is still engaged with their undergraduate programme following a break in studies. This is in contrast to figures from government reports that suggest only around three quarters of those who complete a foundation year progress to undergraduate study (HEPI, 2024), and that only around 69% of those who progress will be successful in obtaining an undergraduate degree within four years (OfS, 2019).

Turning to the second and third research questions, regarding module marks and final degree classifications, data showed that former foundation year students received equivalent marks to their UCAS and Clearing peers at every programme stage, including

their final degree marks. Previous research in this area has been limited. However, two previous studies, by Sanders and Daly (2013) and Cobb and Onions (2018) suggested that their foundation year students achieved equally to non-foundation year peers in their first year of undergraduate study. The sample reported here appears to replicate this trend, and to continue this into the second and third years of undergraduate study, and into eventual final degree classification marks. Additionally, 90.1% of former foundation year students in this study achieved a first or upper second class degree, which is higher than the 64% reported by OfS (2019). More research into other foundation years, including foundation years across subjects and at a range of academic levels, would be of benefit here to see how widely these findings are replicated. It is important to note that the findings here are from a Level 4 foundation year course, and may not be generalisable to courses teaching at other academic levels.

The data that we have used in this project, being quantitative in nature, does not easily help to address the question of why the results seen in this study may be more positive than those seen in government reports. It is possible that, as indicated in the HEPI report (2024), progression and completion rates are higher for former foundation year students in particular subjects, which may include those allied to medicine, than they are for former foundation year students across all subjects. It is also possible that the foundation year makes a substantial contribution to students' understanding of the undergraduate course they plan to study and the profession for which this will prepare them, meaning that students are more certain of their path when they enter their undergraduate course than students who have not had this benefit. During the particular foundation year reported here, students are exposed to professionals in six different fields, and have the opportunity to think about whether the course and profession they are choosing are those which best fit with their interests and skills, and to consider alternatives. They also engage in coursework that requires them to justify their choices, which may aid them in explaining their decisions at interview, and being sure in the course they have chosen. It is also notable that former foundation year students have invested an extra year of effort and money in getting to their chosen undergraduate programme, and this may demonstrate the strength of their interest in the area, which may also underlie increased completion rates.

Limitations and recommendations

Whilst the results above are positive in terms of demonstrating the impact of this particular foundation year, it is acknowledged that there are several limitations in this research. Firstly, the students under study in this paper come from one single foundation year cohort, and there is a need for continued research into successive cohorts on the same programme to see if the positive response shown by this first cohort continues over time. However, it is also important to acknowledge that all cohorts of this programme to date have experienced some impact of Covid-19 on their foundation year and subsequent university education, and that different cohorts were impacted in different ways and to different extents. This may mean that cohorts are

not directly comparable. In addition, successive cohorts of this foundation year have been much larger, and it may be that this has had an impact on their teaching and learning experiences. Furthermore, this paper reports on one single foundation year programme, and it would be useful to the field to understand profiles of completion and marks amongst former students of other foundation years, both within and outside of the health sciences. In particular, if similar courses could combine datasets, researchers could create large sample sizes to better answer questions about foundation years. Further research on successive cohorts of this programme, and on cohorts from other programmes, either singly or in combination is therefore strongly recommended for the future.

It should also be acknowledged that, although the overall cohort numbers reported here are large, only 50 foundation students are included, which may limit the statistical implications of these results. This has meant that analyses have had to remain at the level of the whole cohort and have not been able to deconstruct results for specific undergraduate programmes, some of which take only small numbers (as low as five within this specific cohort) of former foundation year students. Future research on larger cohorts would be of benefit to the field and may allow this kind of breakdown by undergraduate programme, to determine whether the positive results reported above are seen across the School, or only in particular programmes. Additionally, although statistical tests for equivalence of marks were used in this paper, the authors are not yet aware of any methods for establishing equivalence of categorical data, so have used chi squared analysis in this paper. However, this does not fully match the research questions under study, which seek to demonstrate equivalence, which is not the same thing as lack of group differences (Altman & Bland, 1995). Further investigation into appropriate methods for this type of research is therefore a strong recommendation for the future.

In addition, the data analysed here has considered only students who completed programme stages alongside the rest of the cohort, and does not consider those students who may be successful in gaining an undergraduate degree later than their peers, or those who have left the institution where the research is taking place, and who may be successful in gaining an undergraduate degree elsewhere. This means there is a risk of underestimating how many students have been successful in their undergraduate education, and it is recommended that future research seeks ways to address this, possibly by contacting alumni who are no longer within the institution to seek information about their outcomes and how many are still engaged in degree level study.

Additionally, students on health courses within the university under study do not receive numerical marks for clinical placements, which are scored as pass/fail. This means that the analyses conducted here address success in academic terms, but do not fully capture the key skills needed to work as a health professional, other than that students have passed placements in order to progress into the next programme stage. Understanding how former foundation year students perform in placement is an area

that is in need of future research. Studies of students, university staff and practice staff who support placements may be useful for better understanding of this area.

In light of the significant variation in foundation years seen across the UK, particularly in academic level, it must also be acknowledged that the results of this study cannot be considered generalisable to all foundation years. The foundation year under study is taught at Level 4, which is equivalent to first year undergraduate level, and there may be important differences between this and other foundation years, which teach at Level 3, or consider themselves an integral part of a Level 6 qualification. Further research across different types of foundation years is essential to gain a fuller picture of their value. It is also notable that there is limited information currently about the landscape of foundation courses across the UK in terms of the level they teach at, the extent to which they offer standalone qualifications, and the extent to which they are integrated with undergraduate courses. Having clarity on the range of models used for foundation years, and where and how often these are used, should be an important goal for research in this field.

Finally, a significant limitation of this work is that quantitative data cannot provide explanations for the positive results demonstrated above. It is recommended that future research seeks the views of former foundation year students in order to better understand if and how foundation years are successful, according to the students' perspective, in preparing students for undergraduate study, and what changes could be implemented to help them meet this aim. There is also scope for more research with foundation year and undergraduate teaching staff to fully elucidate their views on these questions. This would be of benefit when considering questions about the value and future of foundation years.

Conclusion

The results of the present study demonstrate that the first cohort of former foundation health sciences students on this particular programme had particularly successful outcomes during their undergraduate study following the foundation year. Former foundation year students were found to be more likely to complete each programme stage than their more traditional entry peers, and marks throughout the programme, including final degree qualifying marks were found to show equivalence with students from more traditional entry routes. This suggests that the foundation year, in some way, laid 'foundations for success' for many of its students, and indeed was more successful than suggested by recent government reports on foundation years in preparing students for undergraduate study. It is now recommended that future research establishes whether this pattern holds for successive cohorts of this programme, and for other programmes both within and outside of the health sciences. It is also important that future research seeks the views of former foundation year students themselves to establish how and why foundation years are successful from their perspective. This may help to address some of the concern and uncertainty

around the value of foundation years, and will allow courses to make any necessary changes to enhance student outcomes.

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About the author

Helen Spicer-Cain was the Programme Director for the Introduction to Health Sciences foundation course at City, University of London from 2021 to 2024. She remains Senior Personal Tutor for the course and has a strong interest in helping students succeed in their studies across disciplines. Her subject background is in Speech and Language Therapy.