

# Physics A-level will not be needed for degree

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Students without A-levels in maths and physics are from next year to be offered a new physics-based degree as part of an effort to boost science subjects and the UK's economic competitiveness.

Four institutions will initially offer the new integrated sciences degree, which will focus on physics and include courses on the application of science. The Institute of Physics launched the degree yesterday as part of an £18m programme to boost endangered subjects.

Professor Peter Main, director of science and education at the institute, said: "With [the courses'] up-to-date and relevant content, we hope they will attract the next generation of scientists that this country needs to keep our world-class science and technology research and industry going."

The University of East Anglia, London South Bank University, University of Leicester and the University of Surrey will each offer about 30 places for the course next year.

Science, technology, engineering and maths have all been struggling against waning interest from school leavers. The number of physics undergraduates did not increase between 1999 and 2004 in spite of rapid growth in the university population as a whole. Engineering fell 3 per cent over the same period, maths 11 per cent and chemistry 20 per cent.

Prof Alan Smithers, director of the centre for education and employment studies at Buckingham University, warned earlier this year that physics could be in "terminal decline" because of too few trained physicists teaching in state schools and the single-science GCSE.

