

Languages and related studies

Subject benchmark statements

Subject benchmark statements provide a means for the academic community to describe the nature and characteristics of programmes in a specific subject. They also represent general expectations about the standards for the award of qualifications at a given level and articulate the attributes and capabilities that those possessing such qualifications should be able to demonstrate.

This *Subject benchmark statement*, together with the others published concurrently, refers to the bachelors degree with honours.

Subject benchmark statements are used for a variety of purposes. Primarily, they are an important external source of reference for higher education institutions when new programmes are being designed and developed in a subject area. They provide general guidance for articulating the learning outcomes associated with the programme but are not a specification of a detailed curriculum in the subject. Benchmark statements provide for variety and flexibility in the design of programmes and encourage innovation within an agreed overall framework.

Subject benchmark statements also provide support to institutions in pursuit of internal quality assurance. They enable the learning outcomes specified for a particular programme to be reviewed and evaluated against agreed general expectations about standards.

Finally, *Subject benchmark statements* may be one of a number of external reference points that are drawn upon for the purposes of external review. Reviewers do not use *Subject benchmark statements* as a crude checklist for these purposes however. Rather, they are used in conjunction with the relevant programme specifications, the institution's own internal evaluation documentation, in order to enable reviewers to come to a rounded judgement based on a broad range of evidence.

The benchmarking of academic standards for this subject area has been undertaken by a group of subject specialists drawn from and acting on behalf of the subject community. The group's work was facilitated by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education, which publishes and distributes this *statement* and other *statements* developed by similar subject-specific groups.

In due course, but not before July 2005, the *statement* will be revised to reflect developments in the subject and the experiences of institutions and others who are working with it. The Agency will initiate revision and, in collaboration with the subject community, will make arrangements for any necessary modifications to the *statement*.

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Letter of introduction from the chair of the benchmarking group

The QAA benchmark group for languages and related studies was charged with the task of making explicit to the subject community and other stakeholders the academic qualities and competencies that could be expected of Honours graduates in the subject area. In undertaking its work, the group was guided by a number of assumptions which are implicit in the subject and clear to its practitioners, but which are worth voicing publicly and explicitly. On behalf of the group, I take the opportunity to do so now.

The study of languages and related studies is essentially multifaceted; few other subject areas combine in such an integrated way the intellectual, the vocational and the transferable in order to provide as rich and rewarding an educational experience for students.

The study of languages and related studies at university level represents a multidisciplinary learning process, allowing access to a broad range of enquiries, whether these be literary, cultural, social, historical, political or of some other nature. As such, it is in the best traditions of serious humanistic education.

At the same time, the study of languages and related studies affords the opportunity for acquiring and developing competence in one or more foreign languages, and thus provides for its students a vocational training opportunity. The ability to use a foreign language is, by any definition, a useful acquisition and one which is held in high regard by employers. Graduates in languages and related studies have the highest employability rates of all humanities graduates; in employability terms, graduates in some modern languages are second only to graduates in more narrowly defined vocational subjects such as dentistry or veterinary medicine.

The learning process which all graduates in languages and related studies experience enables students to develop a range of transferable and interpersonal skills, such as teamwork, self-reliance and intercultural competence. This last area is an inherent characteristic of the discipline, and one which is often enhanced through a period of residence abroad undertaken during the programme of study either for study or for work purposes.

Languages and related studies appeals, like no other subject, to a very large number of students of other disciplines who recognise the value of acquiring a measure of competence in another language and some awareness of another culture for reasons of intellectual challenge, potential employment benefit and future personal development.

This *Subject benchmark statement* proceeds from these assumptions and endeavours to give expression to the academic standards, and the means by which they are reached, of the complementary dimensions of study of languages and related studies.

Professor Marianne Howarth
Chair
Languages and related studies benchmark group

Academic standards - Languages and related studies

Introduction

This *Subject benchmark statement (statement)* focuses on the attributes of first degrees with honours in languages and related studies (LRS). There is no standard or unique pattern for such degrees. While many are offered as single honours programmes, this is no longer the prevailing model. Increasingly in British higher education (HE), LRS are studied on a joint or combined honours basis, in conjunction with other languages or with other disciplines, especially, but not exclusively, those in the humanities and the social sciences. Further, many programmes now recognise the capacity of competence in a foreign language to enhance the career and employment prospects of their graduates and make languages course units available to these students as a minor subject or on an elective basis.

Schools and departments will draw upon this *statement* differentially depending on whether they are concerned with a single honours degree, a joint or a combined honours degree, provision for non-specialist linguists through an institution-wide language programme or some other pattern of study. They will also wish to take into account the focus and objectives of their degree programme and their particular research strengths. Those schools or departments offering joint and combined honours degrees will also wish to refer to other *Subject benchmark statements* which may be relevant, such as those for *Area studies* and *Linguistics*.

There is very great variety of provision in LRS. Typically, single and joint honours degree programmes will include the name of the target language or languages in their title, but there are also other degree programmes, and course units within programmes, where the focus is on LRS but where the title of the programme makes no explicit reference to 'languages and related studies'. The variety and breadth of provision reflects both the multidisciplinary nature of study in LRS, and its potential for interdisciplinarity. It is further reflected in the academic affiliations of the membership of the benchmark and reference groups.

The benchmark group represents a wide range of languages and interests in related studies. The membership is broadly representative of the variety and spread of geographical location of institutions providing courses in LRS in the United Kingdom. It was convened by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA), with some nominations by the member subject associations of the University Council of Modern Languages (UCML), including the Association of University Professors and Heads of Department of French in the UK and Ireland (AUPHF), the Conference of University Teachers of German in Great Britain and Ireland (CUTG), the Association of Hispanists in Great Britain and Ireland (AHGBI), the Society of Italian Studies (SIS), the British Association for Slavonic and East European Studies (BASEES), the British Association of Chinese Studies (BACS), the Standing Conference of Heads of Modern Languages in Universities (SCHML), and the Subject Centre for Languages, Linguistics and Area Studies. The benchmark group held five meetings; members of the group also participated in consultations described below.

In undertaking its work, the benchmark group was conscious of the need to emphasise the breadth and diversity of the subject area. The subject covers classical, medieval and modern languages. It includes languages spoken in Europe and outside, including languages indigenous to the United Kingdom, as well as the languages of Africa, Asia and other parts of the world.

The benchmark group was similarly conscious of other standards-related initiatives in languages, in particular, the National Language Standards, the Common European Framework and the European Languages Portfolio. The group regards this *statement* as a specific contribution from British HE to these debates. In the context of the Bologna Declaration, schools and departments may consider it appropriate also to refer to the Common European Framework in their programme specifications.

In addition to the benchmark group, the QAA assembled a 'reference group' with the particular remit to review and comment on the recommendations of the benchmark group.

Responses from this group were considered by the benchmark group and incorporated into the *statement*, as appropriate. Consultative meetings were held with UCML, SCHML and several member subject associations. The first draft of the *statement* was also posted on the Languages, Linguistics and Area Studies Subject Centre web site with an invitation to comment.

1.0 Defining principles

1.1 Undergraduate study of LRS is concerned with the acquisition and development of competence in one or more foreign languages and with the analysis and understanding of another culture, or cultures, in the broadest sense possible, through the medium of the target language(s) concerned. This does not imply that all instruction is necessarily delivered in the target language. The intercultural nature of the subject represents one of its key characteristics and one which is inherent in the discipline. The intercultural nature of the subject includes learning to reflect upon aspects of one's own culture.

1.2 While the subject range is extremely large, covering potentially all languages in the present and in the past, it is possible to identify some components of language study that are common to all programmes. A central component is the focus on the acquisition of competence in the target language. This requires a wide range of knowledge, understanding and skills of a subject-specific and generic nature. Other components normally take the form of thematic studies, related to the culture(s) and society of the language studied. The nature and scope of such related thematic studies will vary according to the aims and objectives of the programme; though they may be specific to the culture(s) of the foreign language studied, they may also draw upon other disciplines in order to inform understanding of that culture.

1.3 Fundamental to the discipline is the recognition that the study of LRS encompasses four complementary dimensions. Languages are at one and the same time:

- a medium of understanding, expression and communication, described here as the **use of the target language** (1.4 - 1.6 below);
- an object of study in their own right, described here as the **explicit knowledge of language** (1.7 below);
- a gateway to related thematic studies comprising various bodies of knowledge and methodological approaches, described here as **knowledge of the cultures, communities and societies where the language is used** (1.8 below); and
- a means of access to other societies and cultures, described here as **intercultural awareness and understanding** (1.9 below).

Virtually all programmes in LRS endeavour to integrate these aspects.

1.4 The study of a language as a medium of understanding, expression and communication will involve the acquisition of practical competence in the use of a specific language. Acquisition of practical competence in a language is carried out to various levels and may focus on any or all of the main skills of reception (listening and reading), production (speaking and writing) and mediation between two or more languages (translation and interpreting).

1.5 A number of features make the acquisition of a language uniquely challenging. It involves acquiring new knowledge of a very detailed kind. Many courses seek to develop the ability to use that knowledge to a high level of accuracy and fluency in the target language. To achieve an appropriate degree of fluency in a foreign language, the learner must devote a great deal of time to seeking active exposure to the language and in practising it on a daily basis. Knowledge of relevant culture(s) is integrated with that process through teaching materials, appropriate specialist coursework and independent study and learning.

1.6 The nature of language study requires intensive interaction in small groups and with native speakers, and access to advanced educational technology (eg audio, video, multi-media and computing facilities). The development of language skills to an advanced level is greatly enhanced by a period of residence abroad. Such residence may involve courses of study in the target language community, academic exchanges, work placements or assistantships, as circumstances permit. Distance learning, where it occurs, is based on a combination of learning through advanced technology and active practice in monitored small groups, and may also include a study period abroad.

1.7 The study of language as an object in its own right comprises knowledge and understanding both of the structure of the language itself and of the social, historical and cultural contexts in which it has been and/or is currently used.

1.8 The multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary nature of the subject is reflected in the study of language as a gateway to thematic studies which permit access to various bodies of knowledge and methodological approaches. This may involve the study of all aspects of the cultures and societies in which the language is used. Much of this knowledge and understanding is embodied in the literature and other cultural products of the target language society. Students working in these areas employ the methodological approaches and techniques which they share with other disciplines, such as those of critical, literary, cultural or textual

analysis. Other modes of knowledge and understanding are embodied in the history, geography, institutions and economic life of these societies. Students of languages can access knowledge of these through primary and secondary source materials in the target language. Yet further knowledge and understanding may pertain to subgroups of the society such as the business, legal, creative, technological or the scientific communities; students who study languages gain first hand access to those communities. The contribution and the interdisciplinary nature of these related thematic studies will vary in size and emphasis according to the aims and objectives of the programme. However, common to all programmes is the belief that the acquisition of competence in the target language significantly enhances students' understanding of an extremely broad and varied range of subjects, disciplines and areas of study.

1.9 The study of a foreign language enables students to participate in the society whose language they study and to operate within different linguistic and cultural contexts. This places them in a privileged position: they can be ambassadors for their own society within the foreign society and they can also learn to view their own society from new perspectives. They can compare and contrast diverse visions of the world, thus promoting intercultural understanding and bringing distinctive benefits both to their own society, for example in employment terms, and to the society or societies of the target language(s).

1.10 The discipline of LRS is remarkable in the variety of ways in which it has sought to integrate the achievement of its objectives within British HE. In many institutions, students may take one or more of a range of languages from a variety of starting points from *ab initio* to post-A level or equivalent and may cease their study at one of many levels, from Certificate of Higher Education to Honours degree level. Further study opportunities are provided at postgraduate level. This multiplicity of purpose, combined with the need to provide small group teaching in a way which recognises the level-sensitive nature of language learning, requires extraordinary flexibility of organisation. Languages may be single Honours degree subjects, subjects in joint degrees, or any proportion of an Honours degree programme, and yet manage to deliver, often for all students in an institution, courses achieving the objectives which this *statement* seeks to outline.

2.0 Nature and extent of subject

2.1 The study of a foreign language, both within higher education in the UK and internationally, covers an enormous range of linguistic and intellectual activity. Only a small proportion of students will study a single foreign language for the entire duration of their undergraduate programme. The majority of students follow programmes either in more than one language, or in a language in combination with another discipline.

2.2 The subject range is also extremely diverse and includes modern as well as non-modern foreign languages. European languages are most commonly taught both as spoken and written languages. Some languages, such as Sanskrit and Old Norse, are taught only as written languages. Others, such as Japanese, have complex written scripts to be learned as well as their spoken forms. The subject also includes languages where a classical component of varying weight may be taught alongside the modern component, as is typically the case for classical Arabic and Chinese. The *statement* also has relevance for the study of languages which are indigenous to the UK but which are studied as foreign languages within the target language culture. Examples include EFL, Welsh (as a second language) and Gaelic.

2.3 The study of LRS involves close engagement with the target language through a balance of receptive (reading and listening) and productive (speaking and writing) skills, as appropriate. This will be achieved through a range of teaching and learning methods, including, where appropriate, classes delivered in the target language, wide reading of relevant print publications and electronic texts and exposure to television and radio broadcasts, film and other cultural manifestations in the target language concerned. Some degree programmes may also provide a languages-specific vocational element through related applied studies, such as translating and interpreting.

2.4 The students' learning experience will normally also involve exposure to various forms of learning technology. These permit access to authentic foreign language materials, eg print and electronic media, television, radio, film and speech recordings, as well as reference sources in areas such as grammar, vocabulary and scripts.

2.5 An explicit expectation of students of LRS is a degree of learner autonomy and responsibility for the development of their language competence through independent study. Such independent study is usually undertaken in close relationship with classroom-based learning and may be guided and developed alongside and beyond such learning.

2.6 In the case of students of European languages, and of Chinese, Japanese and Arabic, among others, study of LRS will normally also include an extended period of residence abroad in a country where the language concerned is spoken, usually in the form of a study or work placement. The period of residence abroad makes a significant, indeed often essential, contribution to the development and enhancement of knowledge, understanding and skills in LRS. It also encourages intercultural awareness and capability, qualities of self-reliance and other transferable graduate skills.

2.7 The range of related thematic studies is likewise extremely diverse. Study may be focused on the cultures and the literatures, both historical and contemporary, of the societies of the language concerned. It may draw upon disciplines such as linguistics, in order to deepen understanding of the language, or history, philosophy, politics, geography, sociology and economics, in order to enhance understanding of the fabric and context of the societies of the language. Languages are also increasingly taught in other multi- and cross-disciplinary combinations, such as languages with business or accountancy, with law, with art and design, with computer science, with engineering, and with the natural sciences. In such combinations, the language studies undertaken are seen as adding value to the knowledge, understanding and skills acquired, thus extending the range of transferable graduate skills. Such diversity and flexibility permits LRS to see itself as both multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary, as well as intercultural and applied in nature.

2.8 The academic location of the subject may vary within the institutional structure. Traditionally, languages have been taught as single-subject disciplines, located in departments named for the subject. A widely implemented model is that of the school or department of modern languages, which provides an academic home for the languages component of all degree programmes incorporating the study of languages. In such contexts, a language resource centre, offering students access to a wide range of language learning facilities, resources and reference materials, may be located within the school or department. In some Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), a language centre, operating as a free-standing central resource, performs this function. Some schools or faculties in other disciplines, business schools, for example, have established languages units within the school in order to meet the language learning requirements of their programmes.

2.9 While this *statement* addresses the knowledge and skills expected of the graduate in LRS, it also recognises the existence of institution-wide language programmes and the large numbers of undergraduate students undertaking language study within or outwith their programme of study in another named discipline. The majority of these students cannot be regarded as languages specialists and do not aspire to the graduate-level standards of competence in the language studied, as set out in section 6.0 of this *statement*. For the majority of such students, the descriptors of levels of proficiency as set out in the *Common European Framework* and use of the *European Language Portfolio* may be both helpful and appropriate. However, the language learning experience of these non-specialist students has much in common with that of the specialist student, in particular, the balance between receptive and productive skills, the exposure to authentic resources and the role of educational technology. As such, therefore, the **Teaching, learning and assessment** section of this *statement* is potentially applicable also to these students. Similarly, for those non-specialists who do pursue language study at a level equivalent to final year, parts of the *statement* relating to language skills and standards and levels of achievement in section 6.2.1: **Use of the target language** may also be relevant and appropriate.

3.0 Subject knowledge and understanding

Related to the four complementary dimensions of programmes in LRS identified in 1.3 above, four key elements typify the knowledge and understanding outcomes of programmes in LRS:

- **use of the target language** for purposes of understanding, expression and communication;
- **explicit knowledge of language;**
- **knowledge of aspects of the cultures, communities and societies where the language is used;** and
- **intercultural awareness and understanding.**

The curriculum in a particular programme will generally depend on the nature of the language, local conditions, specialist strengths and the current state of the evolution of the subject as this is driven by research and other factors. Programmes in LRS will achieve the balance between these four key elements as appropriate for the objectives set.

3.1 Use of the target language

The use of the target language(s) as a medium for understanding, expression and communication is the shared concern of all schools or departments dealing with languages. Certain aspects of effective use of the target language require an extensive knowledge and understanding of the cultures and societies where the language is spoken. Other aspects are related to skills development. Languages programmes seek to impart the appropriate balance of knowledge, understanding and skills.

3.2 Explicit knowledge of language

Explicit knowledge of language makes up a significant part of all languages programmes. As a minimum input it involves the study of linguistic structures in the context of specific language uses; a standard input will involve sufficient knowledge of language structure to enable students to observe the norms of sophisticated written language and some awareness of linguistic systems; at a more specialised level, language study may involve the detailed consideration of synchronic and diachronic dimensions of language linked to a variety of linguistic theories as illustrated by different languages.

Many language programmes seek to enable students to mediate between languages by means of translation and interpreting across a wide range of media. These activities require knowledge of how language systems relate to one another and of the techniques which permit mediation between languages. Where language mediation is a significant part of the curriculum, explicit knowledge of the practice of translation will be a key feature.

3.3 Knowledge of aspects of the cultures, communities and societies where the language is used

The linguistic competences mentioned above are used by schools or departments of languages to enable students to access primary and secondary source materials in the target language in order to gain first-hand knowledge of the cultures, communities and societies where the language is used.

Students of LRS typically explore a variety of approaches to these cultures, communities and societies by drawing on methodologies shared with other disciplines, notably, but not exclusively, literary, cultural, media and film studies; critical theory; gender studies; history; geography; philosophy; politics; sociology; anthropology; religious studies; visual and performing arts; economics; business studies and law¹. The range potentially covers the full spectrum of the humanities and social sciences, and extends also to other subjects making use of source materials in the foreign language. Degree programmes will vary as to the relative weight they attach to these different approaches but all will normally ensure that students completing the programme acquire familiarity with methods, knowledge and understanding appropriate to the academic disciplines involved.

3.4 Intercultural awareness and understanding

A key form of knowledge and understanding developed amongst students of LRS is the ability to compare the view of the world from their own languages and cultures with the view of the world from the languages and cultures they have acquired. The analytical skills they have developed can be used equally well in the study of their own culture and in particular in comparing, contrasting and mediating between the two (or more) societies with which they are familiar. The lived experience of time spent abroad as part of the curriculum further enhances the sense of self and other as products of particular language communities at particular moments in their respective histories.

4.0 Subject skills and generic skills

Graduates in LRS will have developed a wide range of skills which are of great value in a wide range of careers. A period of residence abroad is often crucial in developing and enhancing many of these.

The range of subject skills will vary according to the specific focus of the programme but will typically fall into four areas:

- language skills (4.1 below);
- language-related skills (4.2 below);
- subject-related skills (4.3 below);
- intercultural awareness (4.4 below).

¹ This list is comprehensive but not exhaustive. References elsewhere in this *statement* to related disciplines should be read as illustrative of the full potential range.

The emphasis given to generic skills (4.5) will vary according to the specific focus of the programme but will typically fall into three areas:

- predominantly cognitive skills (4.5.1 below);
- predominantly practical skills (4.5.2 below);
- interpersonal skills and other personal attributes (4.5.3 below).

4.1 Language skills

The acquisition of skills (primarily reading, writing, listening and speaking) in a foreign language is a central objective of language programmes. Programmes endeavour to enable students to develop and use such skills, as appropriate to the target language and to the learning outcomes of the programme. Certain aspects of effective language use may be related primarily to the development of particular language skills, which themselves require specific knowledge. Thus, for example, advanced productive skills of writing and speaking in the target language both require a high level of knowledge of the grammatical, discoursal and pragmatic conventions which govern language use and of the societal factors which make language use effective.

Students of LRS will normally reach a high level of understanding of the target language(s). They will exhibit appropriate levels of achievement (see section 6.0: **Standards**) in productive (speaking, writing) and receptive language skills (reading, listening), and mediation (translating and interpreting). They will be fluent and accurate target language users in a wide range of personal, academic and other domains. They are likely to be at ease with a wide range of topics and registers in formal and informal situations, and to be familiar with a wide range of source materials in the target language.

Language skills are likely to include a sub-set of related skills. These will vary from the relatively simple to the more complex, and could include such activities as email correspondence, talking on the telephone, video-conferencing, and the use of target language documents for carrying out research or writing reports.

Many graduates will have developed language skills which are applicable in a professional context.

4.2 Language-related skills

Students of LRS will have developed appropriate linguistic tools and metalanguage to describe and analyse the main features of the language(s) studied. They will thus be able to make effective use of language reference materials, such as grammars, standard and specialised dictionaries and corpora, to refine knowledge and understanding of register, nuances of meaning and language use.

Students of LRS will be effective and self-aware independent language learners. Their language-learning skills might extend from strategies for learning vocabulary to awareness of learning style and the identification of appropriate learning opportunities. These skills equip them to learn other languages with relative ease; they enhance their command and awareness of English and have been shown to increase their employability.

4.3 Subject-related skills

Subject-related skills are developed through the study of both the language and related thematic areas. Depending on the programme, these may relate to the study of the countries or regions in which the target language is used, including aspects of their literatures, cultures, linguistic contexts, history, politics, geography, social or economic structures. In certain programmes, these will relate to discipline-specific contexts, such as the business, legal, creative, technological or scientific communities within those countries or regions.

Study of these will lead to the development of analytical, critical and specialist skills drawn from the relevant discipline areas. The opportunity to study discipline-specific content in the target language represents a unique contribution to the students' learning experience. Learners will be able to select and use primary and secondary source materials in the target language in respect of these areas.

The multidisciplinary nature of many programmes in languages will lead to a range of subject-related skills. *Subject benchmark statements* in relevant disciplines may be helpful in identifying these skills.

4.4 Intercultural awareness and understanding

Through their studies and their contact with the target language and associated cultures and their related studies, all students of LRS will develop sensitivity to and awareness of the similarities and dissimilarities between other cultures and societies and their own. In particular, their competence in the target language means they will have an appreciation of the internal diversity and transcultural connectedness of cultures, and an attitude of curiosity and openness towards other cultures. The skills and attributes concerned include:

- a critical understanding of a culture and practices other than one's own;
- an appreciation of the uniqueness of the other culture(s);
- an ability to articulate to others the contribution that the culture has made at a regional and global level;
- an ability and willingness to engage with other cultures;
- an ability to appreciate and critically evaluate one's own culture.

4.5 Generic skills

The multidisciplinary and language-specific nature of programmes encourages the development of a wide range of key transferable skills including, where such residence is undertaken, those developed during residence in the target language country or region.

4.5.1 Predominantly cognitive skills

These include the:

- ability to use language creatively and precisely for a range of purposes and audiences;
- ability to engage with and interpret layers of meaning within texts and other cultural products;
- ability to contextualise from a variety of perspectives;
- capacity for critical reflection and judgement in the light of evidence and argument;
- ability to extract and synthesise key information from written and spoken sources;
- ability to organise and present ideas within the framework of a structured and reasoned argument;
- ability to engage in analytical and evaluative thinking.

4.5.2 Predominantly practical skills

These include:

- the ability to use and present material in the target language and one's own language in written and oral forms in a clear and effective manner;
- the ability to work autonomously, manifested in self-direction, self-discipline, and time management;
- accurate and effective note-taking and summarising skills;
- library and bibliographic research skills;
- techniques for using target language source materials;
- analytical and problem-solving skills;
- the ability to write and think under pressure and meet deadlines;
- IT skills, such as word processing, email, databases, online environments and the use of the internet as a research and study tool.

4.5.3 Interpersonal skills and personal attributes

These include:

- communication, presentation, interaction;
- the ability to work creatively and flexibly with others as part of a team;
- mediating skills, qualities of empathy;
- self-reliance, initiative, adaptability and flexibility;
- intercultural competence.

5.0 Teaching, learning and assessment

Note: Lists of teaching, learning and assessment methods presented in this section do not imply an order of priority.

5.1 Characteristics of language study

Methods in language teaching and learning will vary depending on:

- the student's starting point;
- the nature of the language studied (modern or classical, with or without a standard written form, written in alphabetical or other types of script).

Language learning at all levels and in all languages is necessarily intensive, in terms both of teaching contact-hours and learning resources. The need for concentrated study extends all the way through the language learning process, from *ab initio* study of a language to study at advanced levels and beyond.

Language learning involves regular and extended contact with competent users of the language, both for explicit teaching of language structures and for exposure to authentic examples of language use. The latter requires frequent and easy access to target language material in the print, broadcast and electronic media, film, etc.

A defining characteristic of LRS is the use of the target language as a gateway to the study of the societies and cultures in which it is used. Thus, while programmes may include any of a wide range of humanities and social science disciplines as they relate to particular language areas and cultures, and hence some or all of the study methods associated with those disciplines will be used, typically programmes will exploit target-language materials in a way consistent with students' competence at each level.

5.2 Teaching and learning methods

5.2.1 Development of competence in the target language

Given the necessary variety of approach referred to above, language learning will usually include some or all of the following methods, either separately or combined in a range of integrated tasks:

- use of authentic materials. As a general principle, students are exposed to authentic material in the target language as early as possible in their language study. This may include written texts, in a variety of styles and registers. In the case of spoken modern languages, it also includes contact with native speakers, both directly and through radio, TV and the electronic media. These forms of target-language material can be used in a variety of ways, including reading or listening comprehension, translation, and production of related material in the target language through exercises such as summarising, essay-writing and oral presentations;
- formal grammar, taught by instruction, through use of IT resources and by guided study of a textbook, together with drills and exercises;
- use of a variety of language-learning resources, typically for self-access exercises to reinforce knowledge and skills gained in classroom teaching. These may also include the use of tandem learning schemes and CALL programmes;
- study of literary and other texts in the target language. Programmes will vary in the extent to which source material is read in translation, either in teaching or in students' independent study. Programmes may incorporate a progression from study of texts in translation to direct study of target-language texts in the original;
- delivery of specified course units or parts of course units in the target language;
- formative assessment of work submitted, including comment on appropriateness of style, register, presentation etc, as well as correction of grammatical and other errors.

5.2.2 Teaching and learning methods which programmes in the subject area have in common with other humanities-based disciplines

These include:

- directed study of primary and secondary texts and other cultural products;
- commentaries on extracts from texts or documents (placing in context, interpreting in the light of knowledge of the historical period, point of view, etc);
- data collection and evaluation (from guided use of library resources to independent use of subject bibliographies, online databases, etc);
- collecting, selecting, evaluating and presenting information or interpretations of material on a given topic, for presentation orally (seminar presentations) or in writing (essays, reports);
- pair and group work, eg in the preparation of presentations;
- discussion of prepared topics in seminar groups;
- creative writing;
- supervised independent study leading, at the later stages of a programme, to the writing of a dissertation or other large-scale report.

5.3 Period of residence abroad

A particular feature of language programmes is their incorporation of a period of residence abroad. Programmes vary in the use they expect students to make of the period of residence abroad, the tasks which students are expected to carry out, the ways in which these may be supported, monitored and assessed and the way in which this part of students' learning is integrated into the overall objectives of the programme. Most programmes include among their objectives for the period of residence abroad:

- to provide opportunities for and to stimulate contact with native speakers;
- to optimise the opportunities for linguistic progress, for the development of cultural insight and for academic and personal development resulting from extended contact with the target language environment;
- to enable students to reflect on and develop their own language-learning skills and techniques;
- to develop intercultural awareness and understanding;
- where appropriate to the programme, to acquire vocationally oriented experience.

Programmes may also make alternative provision for students whose circumstances prevent them from spending a prolonged period of residence abroad. This may include directed intensive language study during vacations, using any of the methods listed above, in particular those where modern communications can provide alternative contact with the target-language environment.

5.4 Assessment

LRS programmes and the broadening of mental horizons which they aim to foster involve a multiplicity of knowledge, skills and understanding, not all of which will necessarily be explicitly assessed.

5.4.1 Assessment of language competence

Regular and detailed formative assessment is an essential element in language learning. To an extent not experienced in other humanities-based disciplines, assessment is necessary for teachers and learners alike to monitor progress at every stage in the learning process. The multiplicity of knowledge and skills involved in language learning and teaching is matched by a wide variety of types of assessment covering the range of coursework, examinations and peer- and self-assessment.

Assessment of target language skills can be made up of a range of tests and/or assignments designed to demonstrate, as appropriate:

- receptive skills (listening and reading);
- productive skills (speaking and writing);
- mediation skills (translating and interpreting).

Each of these may be tested separately or in combination, while forms of assessment may provide broad evidence of levels of competence and understanding and/or may be used to assess skills in specifically targeted ways. Forms of assessment may include:

- oral presentations;
- participation in structured oral discussions;
- listening comprehension tests;
- transcription and dictation;
- interpreting between speakers of the target and 'home' languages;
- grammar tests;
- summarising and reading for gist or inference;
- paraphrasing;
- translation from and into the target language;
- essays and/or extended projects written in the target language;
- report-writing based on target-language texts or recordings;
- linguistic commentaries;
- drafting target-language texts for a defined audience and purpose;
- computer-based testing, including cloze, multiple choice, discrete point testing and testing on non-alphabetic scripts;
- portfolios of evidence, participation in individual and/or group projects.

Translation and mediation skills may be assessed by unseen papers but also by other means, such as prepared translation with commentary, and post-editing/correction of a draft translation. Some programmes may give particular prominence to translating and interpreting skills and their assessment strategies will reflect this.

Where course units or parts of course units have been delivered in the target language, it may also be appropriate for these elements to be assessed partly or wholly in the target language.

5.4.2 Assessment of related thematic studies

The assessment of course units in related thematic studies is based on a variety of assessment strategies appropriate to the relevant discipline. These may include:

- unseen written examinations;
- essays with access to information sources, written to a timescale which may vary from several weeks to 24 hours;
- open-book examinations;
- oral presentations;
- reports, written or oral, on group projects;
- extended essays, dissertations, individual project reports;
- placement reports/presentations, written or oral.

5.5 Progression and achievement

Programme specifications state the extent to which expected levels of achievement and progression are determined by factors such as the student's starting point (from *ab initio* upwards); the nature of the language, including its script; the nature or focus of the programme, and the purpose for which the language is being studied. However, consistent features will include:

- increasing autonomy in student learning, including the ability to identify and plan individual strategies for learning in LRS;
- growing mastery of and sophistication in language skills;
- deepening understanding of the chosen aspects of the life and multiple cultures of the target language countries, communities or societies.

6.0 Standards

6.1 Preamble

Within the UK a range of languages may be studied at different levels within a variety of degree programmes. The following statements describing standards of achievement are intended to apply principally to those degree programmes in which the study of one or more languages:

- comprises at least one third of the total study load;
- is undertaken consecutively in all years of the programme;
- is recognised in the name of the award (although the language(s) may not be named specifically).

There is no intention to prescribe a curriculum for degree programmes in language and related studies. In determining learning outcomes, individual Honours degree programmes in LRS will give greater or lesser importance to the different areas of skills, knowledge and understanding described below. In some cases, the development of certain skills or aspects of knowledge and understanding may not figure in the programme at all. It is therefore essential that in all cases these statements should be read in conjunction with the information given in individual programme specifications, which will make clear those learning outcomes which are required.

Programme objectives, methods of assessment and learning outcomes will be determined according to:

- the nature or focus of the Honours degree programme;
- the student's starting point;
- the nature of the language(s) studied;
- the purpose for which the language(s) is being studied.

and will be set out in the individual programme specification. (See also 5.5 above.)

The standards of achievement expected for the award of a degree with honours are described under the heading of 'Minimum standards'; the standards normally achieved by the majority of students completing such a degree programme are described under the heading of 'Typical standards'.

While it is expected that a number of students will attain higher levels of achievement than those described as 'Typical', it is also recognised that a common pattern of achievement qualifying a student for the award of a degree with honours may include a mix of different levels of achievement in the various learning outcomes required.

It is for external examiners and subject reviewers to determine whether the standards are being satisfactorily interpreted and applied in assessment and monitoring procedures within individual programmes.

For degree programmes in which the study of one or more languages:

- comprises less than one third of the total study load;
- continues for a shorter period of time than that of the duration of the programme as a whole;

the statements may be applied as and where they may be considered appropriate.

6.2**Levels of achievement****6.2.1*****Use of the target language*****Minimum Standards**

As determined in the individual programme specification, graduates in the discipline of LRS at honours level will be expected to:

- achieve effective communication in the target language(s) with native or other competent speakers of the target language(s);
- be able to exploit for a variety of purposes a range of materials written or spoken in the target language(s);
- be able to make use of their language skills in a professional context.

Typical Standards

- communicate fluently and appropriately, maintaining a high degree of grammatical accuracy, in the target language(s) with native or other competent speakers of the target language(s);
- be able to exploit for a variety of purposes and, as appropriate, to contextualise a broad range of materials written or spoken in the target language(s);
- be able to apply effectively and appropriately their language skills in a professional context.

6.2.2***Explicit knowledge of language***

As determined in the individual programme specification, graduates in the discipline of LRS at honours level will be expected to:

- demonstrate a knowledge and understanding of the structures, registers and, as appropriate, varieties of the target language(s);
- demonstrate a knowledge and understanding of the linguistic principles required to analyse the target language.

- demonstrate a detailed knowledge and effective understanding of the structures, registers and, as appropriate, varieties of the target language(s);
- demonstrate a detailed knowledge and effective understanding of the linguistic principles required to analyse the target language.

6.2.3***Knowledge of related studies***

As determined in the individual programme specification, graduates in the discipline of LRS at honours level will be expected to:

- demonstrate a knowledge and understanding of one or more aspects of the literatures, cultures, linguistic contexts, history, politics, geography, social and economic structures of the societies of the country or countries of the target language(s);
- demonstrate a knowledge and understanding of the cultures and societies of the country of the target language(s) gained through the study of the literatures and/or other cultural products of the target language(s).

- demonstrate an ability critically to evaluate through appropriate methodologies one or more aspects of the literatures, cultures, linguistic contexts, history, politics, geography, social and economic structures of the societies of the country or countries of the target language(s);
- demonstrate a broad knowledge and, using appropriate methodologies, a critical understanding of the cultures and societies of the country or countries of the target language(s) gained through the study of the literatures and/or other cultural products of the target language(s).

Minimum Standards

Typical Standards

6.2.4

Intercultural awareness and understanding

As determined in the individual programme specification, graduates in the discipline of LRS at honours level will be expected to:

- demonstrate an awareness and understanding of one or more cultures and societies, other than their own, that will normally have been significantly enhanced by a period of residence in the country, or countries, of the target language(s);
 - demonstrate an awareness and understanding of the similarities and dissimilarities of those cultures or societies in comparison with their own.
- demonstrate a reasoned awareness and critical understanding of one or more cultures and societies, other than their own, that will normally have been significantly enhanced by a period of residence in the country, or countries, of the target language(s);
 - demonstrate an ability to describe, analyse and evaluate the similarities and dissimilarities of those cultures or societies in comparison with their own.

6.3 Generic skills

Graduates in the discipline of LRS at honours level will be expected to:

- be able to identify and describe problems and to work towards their resolution;
 - be able to communicate information, ideas and arguments both orally and in writing;
 - be able to gather and process information from a variety of paper, audio-visual and electronic sources
 - be able to use IT effectively both as a means of communication and as an aid to learning;
 - be able to work with others as part of a team;
 - be able to demonstrate some ability as an independent learner.
- be able to identify, describe and analyse problems and to devise appropriate strategies for their resolution;
 - be able to communicate information, ideas and arguments cogently and coherently both orally and in writing with due regard to the target audience;
 - be able to gather, process and evaluate critically information from a variety of paper, audio-visual and electronic sources;
 - be able to use IT effectively both as a means of communication and as an aid to learning;
 - be responsive to the disciplines of working with others and to be able to work effectively as part of a team;
 - be an effective and self-aware independent learner.

Appendix 1

Membership of the benchmark group

Dr Robin Aizlewood	University College London
Dr Mark Davie	University of Exeter
Mr Clive Griffiths	University of Manchester
Professor Marianne Howarth (chair)	The Nottingham Trent University
Ms Elspeth Jones	Leeds Metropolitan University
Dr Vanessa Knights	University of Newcastle upon Tyne
Professor Bonnie McDougall	University of Edinburgh
Dr Rob Rix	Trinity and All Saints College, Leeds
Professor Richard Towell	University of Salford
Professor David Walker	University of Sheffield
Professor Rhys Williams	University of Wales, Swansea
Ms Vicky Wright	University of Southampton