Linguistics

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*.

ISBN 1 85824 641 5

AR 047 3/2002

Published by
Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education
Southgate House
Southgate Street
Gloucester GL1 1UB

Tel 01452 557000
Fax 01452 557070
Web www.qaa.ac.uk

Text printed by
Linney Direct Digital

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Academic standards - Linguistics

1 Introduction

This *Subject benchmark statement (statement)* is about first degrees with honours in linguistics. This includes single honours linguistics degrees; joint honours degrees where linguistics is combined with another discipline or disciplines, including those involving a language or languages; combined honours degrees including linguistics; and linguistics modules in other honours degrees.

There is a great variety of provision in linguistics. The UCAS website records that in 2001 there were 69 higher education institutions (HEIs) offering 645 courses which include linguistics as part of an undergraduate degree; these include 19 single subject linguistics honours degrees on offer at 16 HEIs. The majority of these degree programmes have linguistics in their title, but there are also degree programmes, and modules within degree programmes, whose focus is linguistic, but whose title makes no explicit reference to linguistics; some prefer the more general term language. It is relevant to note that linguistics is also widely studied at postgraduate level: the Prospects Postgraduate Directory lists 44 HEIs offering 117 taught postgraduate courses involving linguistics (including applied linguistics). In many HEIs, linguistics is offered in a separate department or division of linguistics; some have departments providing linguistics together with English or modern languages and in others there are groups that teach linguistics within a larger department, school or faculty. This variety of provision reflects the essentially interdisciplinary nature of much linguistic study, and is reflected in the academic affiliations of the members of the benchmark and consultation groups.

Departments will draw on this *statement* differently depending on whether they are concerned with a single honours degree, a joint honours degree or some other pattern of study; on the focus of their degree programme, and on their particular research strengths. Those departments offering joint and combined honours degrees will also want to draw on other appropriate *Subject benchmark statements*, particularly *Languages and related studies, English, Philosophy, Psychology, Speech and language therapy, and Communication, media, film and cultural studies.* Other *statements* may also be relevant.

The benchmark group covers a variety of linguistic interests and is broadly representative of the variety of institutions that teach linguistics in the United Kingdom. It was assembled by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA), with some nominations by the British Association of Academic Phoneticians (BAAP), the British Association for Applied Linguistics (BAAL) and the Linguistics Association of Great Britain (LAGB), the major subject associations concerned with linguistics. The benchmark group held four meetings, and individuals also participated in the consultations described in the next paragraph. In addition to the benchmark group, the QAA assembled a 'consultation group' with the particular remit to review and comment on the recommendations of the benchmark group. The membership of the benchmark group is listed at the end of this document.

A draft of the *statement* was made available to relevant departments and subject associations. Consultative meetings were held with BAAL, the LAGB and the Third International Symposium on Bilingualism. The Languages, Linguistics and Area Studies Subject Centre hosted an open meeting. In addition, the draft statement was posted on a website and comments solicited. The benchmark group is grateful for the many constructive comments received from departments and individuals through the consultation group, the consultative meetings, via the web, by email and from colleagues. They have materially improved the document.

2 Defining principles

Linguistics is concerned with language in all its forms, spoken, written and signed. Because language appears to be a uniquely human attribute, the questions of what language is, how human beings come to have it, and how they use it, have been pursued for over 2,000 years. Inquiry into language has raised fundamental questions about human cognition and behaviour ever since. Perhaps the key insight of linguistics is just that language and linguistic behaviour are highly structured, and the guiding principle of modern linguistics is that the nature of these structures can be elucidated by systematic study through a range of theoretical and empirical methodologies.

Linguists today concern themselves with many different facets of language, from the physical properties of the sound waves in utterances to the intentions of speakers towards others in conversations and the social contexts in which conversations are embedded. The various sub-branches of linguistics are concerned with how languages are structured, what they have in common, the range of and limits to the differences among them, how they are acquired and used, how they change and so on. The study of the properties of language in this sense, and the construction of theoretical models for these areas of inquiry, all come under the rubric of linguistics.

Since language enters into almost every area of human activity, the application of linguistic analysis can be extremely broad, encompassing almost any area where language is a practical concern. A sample of these areas might include, but is by no means restricted to: the teaching and learning of particular languages; language issues in new technologies; the development of writing systems, dictionaries, and standardised technical formats for languages; the study of translation between languages; language issues in globalising multilingual and multicultural societies; including language planning and language policy; the study of cases where people have linguistic difficulties (such as aphasia, hearing or speech disorders); the study of communication between groups of people with different sociological, cultural and ethnic backgrounds; language awareness and language ideology; the revitalisation of endangered languages; the development of computational techniques for dealing with language corpora and with linguistic input to database query systems; and the use and abuse of language in legal contexts.

This benchmark statement is concerned, then, with linguistics understood as the systematic study of language in both its theoretical and applied aspects. However, the line between these two aspects is not always easy to draw, and, as in other disciplines, each approach may incorporate developments and insights from the other.

Since the use of language by human beings involves a wide range of cognitive, social and interactional skills and competences, the intellectual tools brought to bear upon the study of language also come from a wide range of disciplines. This means that there is a range of viewpoints on language from formal, sociological and psychological perspectives, as well as from practical concerns such as language teaching. Because of this, much of linguistics is inter-disciplinary in both the issues it addresses and the methodologies brought to bear. These approaches complement the modes of analysis developed to address traditional structural questions, leading to the rich interdisciplinary nature of much of linguistics. Single honours degree programmes in linguistics will cover a substantial part of what is described in the next section. Joint programmes will, in general, select or modify various aspects of this in the light of their own teaching and research strengths and the needs of their students. Both single and joint programmes will have at least a basic introductory course unit that introduces students to the wide range of issues in linguistics.

3. Subject skills and other skills

3.1 Subject knowledge and understanding

As will be clear from section 2, language may be studied from a range of perspectives. An act of linguistic communication involves the deployment by each interlocutor of a vast range of skills, many of which are not subject to conscious introspection. Traditionally, a number of areas of analysis have been singled out into particularised domains of inquiry, which examine specialised linguistic properties and how these properties vary across speakers, time and space.

Graduates with a first degree with honours in linguistics will be expected to have an appreciation of the basic concepts, modes of analysis and theoretical approaches in more than one of the areas of study which are traditionally distinguished within structural approaches to linguistics and which we term 'levels of analysis': phonetics, phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, pragmatics and discourse. In addition they will be expected to have an appreciable control of theory and practice in a range of other areas of study which bring to bear perspectives on language which have developed out of concerns for the role of language in society, its nature as a cognitive domain, the way it is acquired, the way it changes and the way it forms part of a gamut of communicative modalities. Programmes are expected to vary in how they develop the balance between these areas. Some will focus mainly on the levels of analysis and the interactions between them as areas for study in their own right, while others will treat the levels of analysis as tools which facilitate an understanding of a sociolinguistic, psycholinguistic, educational or computational perspective on language. Joint programmes will select topics appropriate for the particular focus of their degrees.

A linguistics student would have a knowledge of a range of **empirical linguistic phenomena** and of the relevant **descriptive terminology** so as to have a practical understanding of what language is and how it works in actual use. This knowledge may call on any or all of the basic levels of analysis and on other areas of enquiry. It may be largely descriptive but is usually informed by an appropriate theoretical framework. It may involve the systematic study of the structure and use of one language but ideally would include data from a wide range of languages so that the structure and use of an individual language is looked at as part of the larger picture. It may involve a comparative study of more than one language, which could include translation. Translation theory draws on insights from various branches of linguistics, such as lexicology, text linguistics and pragmatics, as well as contrastive analyses of language systems and cultural practices in different speech communities.

The study of the physical properties of speech sounds and of the articulatory and psychological mechanisms used in speech production and perception is known as **phonetics**. A subfield, often called 'practical phonetics', is the study of recognising, transcribing, and producing the sounds of the world's languages. Phonetic theory deals with the mapping between language specific cognitive representation of speech sounds and organs used to produce and perceive these sounds. A specialist in phonetics would be expected to have an understanding of one or more theories in each branch of phonetics studied, and to command a range of techniques for recording and observing speech, including phonetic transcription and instrumental displays, as well as an understanding of experimental design and data analysis.

The study of the systematic use of sounds in language is known as **phonology**. Universal phonology is the study of the properties which all human sound systems are thought to share. The phonology of a particular language describes and tries to explain the relationship between the phonetic entities (both segmental and suprasegmental) found in spoken language and the abstract phonological representation thought to underlie them. This is done through specifying 'legal' sequences of abstract phonological units and identifying the processes through which pronunciations of these sequences can be realised. A specialist in phonology would be expected to have a critical understanding of one or more approaches to describing/explaining sound systems.

The study of the structure of words and of the properties of the minimal units which bear independent meaning or grammatical function is known as **morphology**. Morphologists investigate how these minimal units are constituted and how they interrelate, addressing such questions as the nature of lexical entries and how these relate to the morphological patterns found in language. A specialist in morphology would, in addition to the basic categories used for morphological analysis, have an appreciation of one or more theoretical approaches to morphology, and an understanding of the relationships between morphology and syntax, phonology or semantics.

The investigation of how sentences are constructed and what relations may hold between their subparts is known as **syntax**. Syntacticians investigate how these larger structures are built up. A specialist in syntax would in addition to the core analytical ideas of this field, have an understanding of at least one of the major syntactic theories; would know, in principle at least, how to assess the predictive power of such a theory via empirical means; and would have an understanding of the relationships between morphology and syntax, between syntax and semantics and between syntax and the lexicon.

The nature of the meaning of the minimal units characterised by morphology, how these meanings interrelate and how they compose via morphological and syntactic means to give more complex meanings is known as **semantics**. Semanticists also investigate the meaning properties and relations that hold between different structures built up by the syntax, often, but not only, using techniques from formal logic. A specialist in semantics would, in addition to basic concepts of semantic analysis, have an understanding of one of more theories of either lexical or propositional semantics and be able to assess the predictive capability of such theories.

The study of the way people use linguistic structures in particular situational or discourse contexts is known as **pragmatics**. This involves the meanings that are intended and understood by language users producing and interpreting utterances in real situations, especially when these are not literally expressed in the semantics of the words and structures used. As well as an understanding of basic concepts in pragmatics, a specialist in pragmatics would have a grasp of one or more theories of pragmatics, and an ability to engage in the pragmatic analysis of particular discourses.

Investigations of relations between language, action, knowledge and situation are undertaken at the analytical level of **discourse**, which is variously understood to refer to connected stretches of language occurring beyond the sentence, to situated verbal interaction and to a specific domain of language use. Unlike the more traditional areas of study outlined so far, this level does not map on to a single field of study, but is investigated in a wide range of overlapping areas, many of which are inter disciplinary. These include: conversation analysis, critical language study, discourse analysis, pragmatics, psycholinguistics, semiotics, sociolinguistics, stylistics and text linguistics. Basic concepts include multifunctionality and context-embeddedness. A student specialising in one of these areas would have a working knowledge of one or more theories of discourse.

The **lexicon** holds information about the phonetic, phonological, syntactic, semantic and pragmatic properties of words and consequently has a central role in these levels of analysis. It is also a major area of investigation in other areas of linguistics, such as psycholinguistics, typological linguistics and language acquisition. Lexicology is concerned with the nature of the vocabulary and the structure of the lexicon; and lexicography applies the insights of lexicology, along with those of other linguistic disciplines, to the study of dictionaries and lexicons.

Sociolinguistics includes the study of variation in the language of individual speakers and groups of speakers, and their (conscious or subconscious) intentions in selecting particular speech styles and forms. This consequently includes the study of regional dialects, the ethnography of language, and anthropological linguistics. Features as diverse as gender, age, social status, topic of conversation and identity of interlocutor can also correlate with particular linguistic variants. Variation may involve code-switching and multilingualism, and may also lead to borrowing between languages used in a single community. Further possible consequences are language death, or the rise of pidgin and creole languages. Variation may be studied at all levels of analysis; in relation to cognate disciplines, including notably psychology and sociology; and in terms of integration with linguistic and social theories, and with discourse analysis.

Language variation can also be seen as language change in progress. More generally, **historical linguistics** has three subparts: the study of language change over time; the genealogical classification of languages into family groups; and the reconstruction of hypothetical ancestors for those groups. Historical linguists may work on the origin and evolution of language, or pursue connections of linguistic groupings and data with evidence from cognate disciplines, notably archaeology. The study of language change may focus on any level of language, and will also incorporate the identification of motivations for change in terms of, for instance, phonetics, acquisition, and social and political factors. An important area of study involves the interaction of change with language variation, and the extent to which both can be integrated with linguistic theories.

Typological linguistics involves the classification of languages in terms of common structural features and the implicational relations among those features. Areal linguistics is concerned with similarities and differences between languages in a particular geographical area. Contrastive linguistics involves comparisons between two or more individual languages, which may or may not be historically related.

Psycholinguistics is the study of how language (spoken, written or signed) is represented in the mind; how it is acquired; how it is understood and produced; and how it relates to other components of cognition, such as memory, perception and action. The study of the mental processes involved in language comprehension and production is a major focus of investigation. In comprehension, psycholinguists study the parsing of syntactic structure; word recognition; the semantic and pragmatic interpretation of utterances; and perceptual aspects of language processing, using evidence primarily from laboratory experiments (measuring reaction time and memory for example). The study of language production aims to elucidate what is involved in the planning of utterances at all levels, from intention to articulation, and uses evidence both from language use and from language and communication breakdown. Neurolinguists study the neurological basis for language use and development, and use techniques such as brain imaging to study the physical support for human language in the brain.

In studying **language acquisition**, linguists and psycholinguists are concerned with how the different levels of language develop in children acquiring their native language, or in individuals acquiring a second or third language. Core issues underlying current investigations of first language acquisition are concerned with what constitutes knowledge of language and how it is acquired by children; whether, or which aspects of, language behaviour are innate or learnt; and language socialisation in childhood. Second language acquisition is the study of the acquisition of a language after the first language is established. As well as the core issues mentioned above, a comparison between first and second language acquisition serves to further enhance the nature/nurture debate, and a link with pedagogical issues is often made. The study of the acquisition of two or more languages from birth (bilingualism/multilingualism) focuses on the mental organisation of the two language systems and its implications for our theories of how language is mentally represented, as well as on the social and psychological forces underlying their use (such as interference and code-switching).

Clinical linguistics is the application of linguistic theories and analytical techniques in the field of speech, language and communication impairment. It can be used in the description, explanation and remediation of a wide range of impairments in children and adults. All areas of linguistics can be applied clinically to study breakdown in the perception, production and representation of language in all its modalities. By investigating the ways in which communication may be impaired, clinical linguistics also provides insights into the nature of normal language, its development and use.

Computational linguistics/natural language processing covers a wide area concerned with computer processing of human language, often for practical purposes such as human/machine interaction, but also as a methodology for testing implementations of linguistic analysis (for example, computer simulations of language and speech). Often central to the construction of such systems are language corpora; such corpora come with a range of linguistic annotations and in a range of languages. A huge range of computational techniques is applied, and the field is fast developing, including such areas as: natural language understanding and generation; information extraction and retrieval; dialogue modelling; stochastic

modelling; speech recognition and synthesis; and the computational manipulation of corpus data. A specialist in computational linguistics would be expected to have an understanding of one or more areas of linguistic analysis and an ability to use/develop computational tools to deal with these using an appropriate programming language.

Language is central to educational processes at all levels, and the academic study of **language in education** is a recognised focus of the broader linguistics curriculum. Themes typically addressed in language in education programmes include: the role of language in all types of learning, and in children's cognitive and social development; educational discourses and genres; the uses and meanings of literacy in educational and non-educational settings; literacy development; educational responses to language disorders; language education policy and planning; the role of standard languages, dialects and minority languages in education; the learning, teaching and assessment of first, second and foreign languages; and bilingualism and bilingual education.

In some areas, the discipline of **linguistics** itself is the object of study: studies of the history of linguistics look at sociological and historical aspects of the development of branches and sub-branches of the discipline; mathematical linguistics studies the formal properties of systems of linguistic analysis; the philosophy of linguistics considers the philosophical status of linguistic theories. Philosophy of language investigates the nature of language from a philosophical point of view, while linguistic philosophy explores the role of language in understanding philosophical concepts.

3.2 Subject-specific knowledge, understanding and skills

As indicated, linguistics has an extremely broad base and interacts with many other disciplines. Different subsets of the topics described in section 3.1 will appear in different programmes. A programme leading to a single honours degree in linguistics will cover a substantial proportion of these topics. Joint and combined honours degrees will draw on an appropriate subset of these topics. In addition holders of a first degree with honours in linguistics will have acquired a range of other subject-specific skills and knowledge. Relevant topics are:

- the nature of a theory and what constitutes an explanation;
- the central analytical concepts and methods of enquiry appropriate to the topics described in section 3.1;
- the need for a systematic approach to linguistic phenomena and how theory helps to organise understanding;
- the relevance of theories and research in other disciplines;
- the basic techniques for collecting data in the various areas of linguistics, including the creation and exploitation of bodies of data, such as computer language corpora, elicitation tasks, introspection, transcription, laboratory experiments and questionnaires;
- the ethical issues involved in the collection and use of data from informants;
- the technical issues involved in the collection of reliable data;
- the basic techniques for the analysis of data, including the use of statistics and corpus-analytic techniques;
- the reasons for, and the criteria for evaluating, alternative analyses of a given set of data;
- the presentation of linguistic data and analyses by means of graphs, tables, matrices and other diagrams.

3.3 Generic intellectual skills and personal transferable skills

Degrees in linguistics offer students the opportunity to develop generic intellectual skills and personal transferable skills. A curriculum which enables students to develop these skills can be important for students wishing to continue their studies at postgraduate level. For those students who do not pursue linguistics beyond the first degree with honours the development of these skills may be even more important, as the skills outlined below are a vital asset on today's job market.

Among the generic intellectual skills a linguistics degree can offer, the following abilities are of particular significance:

- assessing the merits of contrasting theories and explanations, including those of other disciplines;
- distinguishing descriptive systems from the data they describe;
- abstracting and synthesising information;

- constructing and managing an argument;
- thinking and judging independently;
- critically judging and evaluating evidence, especially in relation to the use of language in specific modes, genres and contexts, and in non-academic domains (textual analysis and design; relational aspects of language use; language in social, professional and other occupational contexts; translation and interpretation);
- awareness of the relation between knowledge of language and critical evaluation and implementation of language in social life;
- acquiring complex information of diverse kinds, from a variety of sources (libraries, WWW, CD-ROMs, corpora, discussions with peers etc);
- recognising problems and developing problem-solving strategies;
- collecting, analysing and manipulating data of diverse kinds;
- using a variety of methods, and assessing the advantages and disadvantages of each method;
- writing essays and research reports using the appropriate register and style and with proper referencing;
- advanced literacy and numeracy;
- using the necessary computational tools and software packages wherever appropriate for the analysis of data;
- considering the ethical issues involved in data collection and data storage.

The personal transferable skills students can develop when studying linguistics include among others:

- communicating effectively and fluently in speech and writing;
- understanding the dynamics of communication;
- working independently, demonstrating initiative, self-organisation and time-management;
- working with others to achieve common goals;
- managing their own learning self-critically.

4 Teaching, learning and assessment

4.1 General

This *statement* is about first degrees with honours in linguistics, including single honours linguistics degrees and joint and combined honours degrees where linguistics is studied with another discipline or disciplines. Whatever the programme, teaching, learning and assessment methods should be designed to deliver progression, coherence and balance and to reflect its specific aims, emphases and learning outcomes. Students should be provided at the outset with full documentation on their programme of study, informing them of those aims and emphases.

A wide variety of learning styles and activities should be acknowledged throughout. To stimulate student motivation and involvement, learning strategies should offer a balance between information transmission and opportunities for active assimilation, application, questioning, debate and critical reflection.

4.2 Teaching and learning

There should be explicit links between teaching and learning methods and the specific aims, emphases and learning outcomes of the degree programme. Teaching and learning methods should be appropriate for the learning needs and stage of progression of the students.

Accordingly, teaching and learning methods may be drawn from among the following as appropriate:

- lectures;
- seminars;
- workshops;
- presentations;

- group and individual tutorials;
- planning, designing and executing a piece of rigorous enquiry, such as a group or individual (research) project;
- problem sets;
- short exercises involving data analysis;
- external placements;
- open and resource-based learning;
- independent learning;
- use of data, resources, networking, and literature for the development of analytical skills;
- the use of relevant computer software.

In order to stimulate student motivation and involvement, a wide range of teaching and learning methods is desirable. The emphasis on students' self-direction and self-responsibility will progressively increase in the teaching and learning strategies utilised. The ongoing development of communicative competencies among students will form part of this process.

4.3 Assessment

Since assessment influences what students learn there should be explicit links between assessment strategies and the specific aims and learning outcomes of the degree programme. Assessment should be appropriate for the learning needs and stage of progression of the students; assessment formats should be appropriate for the topic. Accordingly, methods of assessment may be drawn from the following:

- essays;
- individual and group project reports;
- seen and unseen, written, aural and oral examinations;
- individual and group presentations;
- short exercises involving data analysis;
- cumulative problem sets involving data analysis;
- critical self- and peer-evaluation;
- a portfolio of essays or other written work;
- tasks aimed at the assessment of specific skills (for example, IT skills, transcription skills);
- dissertations.

Assessment is not only evaluative; it is also formative and diagnostic. Consequently, students should be provided with constructive feedback where appropriate. The rationale for assessment on programmes should be clearly presented to students and there should be clear, explicit assessment criteria for all forms of assessment.

5 Standards

Standards are expressed in terms of learning outcomes, the knowledge and skills acquired by students who have followed a programme of study leading to a first degree with honours in linguistics. The goal of such programmes is to produce graduates with the attributes described below as 'Typical knowledge and skills'; these are associated with the majority of students obtaining a degree with honours in linguistics. Programmes in linguistics also aim to impart a minimum set of knowledge and skills to all participating students. These attributes are described below as 'Threshold knowledge and skills'. The best students on linguistics programmes usually acquire a set of attributes which exceeds in range and/or depth those described as typical.

The benchmark statement does not lay down a rigid curriculum but presents the set of topics from which a choice is made by individual degree programmes involving linguistics. Likewise the statement of standards below does not specify particular combinations of attributes as obligatory for particular types of degree programme. Furthermore, the statement of standards is not to be interpreted as requiring each attribute to be assessed separately from the others or to be assessed at all. For example, attributes such as the key skills and intellectual skills are manifested in pieces of work whose primary purpose is to give students an opportunity to display knowledge, understanding and discipline-specific skills.

The attributes acquired by graduates are determined by degree programmes. Graduates who have followed programmes of study combining linguistics as a minor or major topic with other subjects do not possess the same range and depth of attributes as graduates with a single honours degree in linguistics. They do have knowledge, understanding and discipline-specific skills relating to at least two disciplines and they should acquire the same general key and intellectual skills from all the subjects in their degree programme.

Even students taking a single honours degree in linguistics are not expected to acquire all the knowledge, understanding and discipline-specific skills mentioned in the following tables. They are expected to acquire a majority of them, but to different extents and depths depending on particular programmes of study, on different choices within particular programmes, and on differences in personal capacities.

In accordance with the preceding two paragraphs, the phrase 'the areas of analysis' employed in the sections 'knowledge and understanding' and 'discipline-specific skills' is to be interpreted as 'the areas of analysis relevant to particular subject areas and/or theoretical orientations within degree programmes'.

The statement of the typical level of attainment uses phrases such as 'appropriately to employ', 'well-founded critique', 'informed evaluation' and so on. It is for external examiners and subject reviewers to determine whether these phrases are being satisfactorily interpreted and applied in assessment and reporting procedures within individual programmes.

On completion of a degree with honours in linguistics, students should possess knowledge, understanding and skills in subsets of the areas of linguistic analysis listed in section 3.2. Subject to the differences in programme, choice of courses and personal capacities, students should possess the following attributes:

Threshold level of attainment	Typical level of attainment
Knowledge and understanding	**Knowledge and understanding**
a) for the areas of analysis listed in section 3.2, to demonstrate an understanding of the nature of a theory and of what constitutes an explanation;	a) for the areas of analysis listed in section 3.2, to demonstrate both an appreciation of the nature of a theory and of what constitutes an explanation and an understanding of the criteria for evaluating alternative theories and explanations;
b) to specify and illustrate the core analytical concepts relevant to each area of analysis;	b) to specify, illustrate and apply appropriately to new data the core analytical concepts relevant to each area of analysis;
c) to describe the central components of any one formal model in a given area of analysis;	c) to describe, apply and revise the central components of any one formal model in a given area of analysis;
d) to demonstrate an understanding of evaluations of alternative analyses of a given data set;	d) to demonstrate an understanding of alternative analyses of a given data set and an ability to develop informed evaluations of the alternative analyses;
e) to be able to describe and use under supervision the relevant basic techniques for collecting and analysing data.	e) to be able to describe, appropriately to evaluate and correctly to use with minimum supervision the relevant basic techniques for collecting and analysing data.
Discipline-specific skills	**Discipline-specific skills**
a) for the areas of analysis listed in section 3.2, to identify and discuss the technical issues involved in the collection of reliable data;	a) for the areas of analysis listed in section 3.2, to identify the technical issues involved in the collection of reliable data;
b) to recognise the ethical issues involved in the collection of data from informants in the field or from subjects in the experimental laboratory;	b) to recognise and evaluate the ethical issues involved in the collection of data from informants in the field or from subjects in the experimental laboratory;

Discipline-specific skills	**Discipline-specific skills**
c) to apply under guidance techniques such as the eliciting of data by questionnaire; the recording of word-lists, read passages and conversation; the collection of data by the participant-observer method; the investigation of articulatory phenomena by laboratory techniques; the designing and administering of laboratory experiments for the investigation of language processing; the organising and exploitation of electronic databases using the procedures of corpus linguistics; the analysis of written and spoken text; the analysis of spoken interaction;	c) to apply with minimum guidance, and appropriately to evaluate the results of, techniques such as the eliciting of data by questionnaire; the recording of word-lists, read passages and conversation; the collection of data by the participant-observer method; the investigation of articulatory phenomena by laboratory techniques; the designing and administering of laboratory experiments for the investigation of language processing; the organising and exploitation of electronic databases using the procedures of corpus linguistics; the analysis of written and spoken text; the analysis of spoken interaction;
d) to demonstrate an understanding of the issues involved in the basic techniques of data analysis such as distributional criteria, spectrographic analysis, the use of IT tools for the investigation of electronic databases, the use of computer packages for the analysis of acoustic phenomena, the use of laboratory techniques for the investigation of articulatory phenomena, the choice of appropriate statistical tests, the use of video and audio material in the analysis of spoken interaction;	d) to demonstrate an understanding of the issues involved in the basic techniques of data analysis; to evaluate and choose appropriate techniques such as distributional criteria, spectrographic analysis, the use of IT tools for the investigation of electronic databases, the use of computer packages for the analysis of acoustic phenomena, the use of laboratory techniques for the investigation of articulatory phenomena, relevant statistical tests, the use of video and audio material in the analysis of spoken interaction;
e) to use under supervision the techniques listed in (d);	e) to apply the techniques listed in (d) with minimum guidance;
f) to demonstrate understanding of data and analyses presented by means of graphs (including tree diagrams), tables, matrices and other diagrams and be able to use these different types of presentation under supervision.	f) to demonstrate understanding of data and analyses presented by means of graphs (including tree diagrams), tables, matrices and other diagrams and present data appropriately by these means with minimum supervision.
Intellectual skills	**Intellectual skills**
a) to demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between data and theory, in particular the central role of hypotheses and the testing of hypotheses;	a) to demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between data and theory, in particular the central role of hypotheses and the testing of hypotheses and to exploit the understanding in the analysis of data;
b) to demonstrate an understanding of issues and problems and the type of data that is relevant to their solution;	b) to demonstrate an understanding of issues and problems and to determine and collect the type of data relevant to their solution;
c) to follow coherent arguments;	c) to follow and develop coherent arguments, to recognise and give a critique of flaws in arguments;
d) to cite evidence appropriately;	d) to cite evidence appropriately and to seek out and deploy relevant data for the solution of analytical problems;
e) to demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between social, educational and cultural issues and such topics as the analysis of spoken and written text, the analysis of sentences and clauses, the analysis of vocabulary, the study of standard and non-standard language and the processes of standardisation, the analysis of spoken interaction, the investigation of literacy practices.	e) to demonstrate an understanding, and to engage in critical discussion of, the relationship between social, educational and cultural issues and such topics as the analysis of spoken and written text, the analysis of sentences and clauses, the analysis of vocabulary, the study of standard and non-standard language and the processes of standardisation, the analysis of spoken interaction, the investigation of literacy practices.

Key skills

a) under supervision, to plan, design and execute a piece of research or an inquiry, either as a member of a group or independently;

b) to communicate ideas about language in writing or by oral presentation, using basic visual aids with text and graphics and relevant IT tools;

c) to search out and synthesise information stored on paper, electronically (computerised databases or recordings) or visually (videos);

d) to present a discussion based on information collected from various sources and synthesised into a coherent and cohesive whole with appropriate acknowledgments and lists of sources;

e) to use IT skills to communicate by email, to find and lodge information on the internet, to search electronic databases and to store the results of such searches, to produce electronic documents;

f) under guidance, to interpret information presented in the form of diagrams, tables and graphs;

g) under guidance, to undertake self-directed study and learning, with appropriate time-management.

Key skills

a) with minimum supervision, to plan, design and execute a piece of research or an inquiry, either as a member of a group or independently;

b) to engage in scholarly debate, effectively to communicate ideas about language in writing or by oral presentation using all appropriate aids, and on the basis of advanced literacy skills independently to create complex written documents as required by industry and commerce, the public services and the world of education;

c) to search out information stored on paper, electronically (computerised databases or recordings) or visually (videos) and produce a succinct, coherent and persuasive synthesis with appropriate acknowledgments and lists of sources;

d) to present a focused, directed and clear discussion based on information collected from various sources and synthesised into a coherent and cohesive whole;

e) to use IT skills to communicate by email, to find and lodge information on the Internet, effectively to search electronic databases and store the results of such searches, to produce well-organised electronic documents;

f) independently to interpret, evaluate and exploit information presented in the form of diagrams, tables and graphs and to write competent reports on the information;

g) independently to undertake successful self-directed study and learning, with appropriate time management.

Appendix 1

Membership of the benchmark group

Dr David Adger	University of York
Dr Keith Brown (chair)	University of Cambridge
Dr Billy Clark	Middlesex University
Dr Sara Howard	University of Sheffield
Professor April McMahon	University of Sheffield
Professor Jim Miller	University of Edinburgh
Professor Rosamond Mitchell	University of Southampton
Dr Florence Myles	University of Southampton
Dr Linda Shockey	University of Reading
Dr Jeanine Treffers-Daller	University of the West of England, Bristol
Dr Mary Talbot	University of Sunderland
Professor Mark Tatham	University of Essex