



# Subject Benchmark Statement: Linguistics

## The Basics

This document is a summary of the Subject Benchmark Statement for Linguistics. It is specifically designed to provide a short and accessible overview of the main statement for students, employers and academics. It is not intended to replace or alter the Subject Benchmark Statement, which should be referred to in the design and approval of courses and when any further detail is required.

Subject Benchmark Statements describe the nature of study and the benchmark academic standards expected of graduates in specific subject areas, and in respect of particular qualifications. They provide a picture of what graduates in a particular subject might reasonably be expected to know, do and understand at the end of their course or programme.

Subject Benchmark Statements are presented in four sections. Section 1 outlines the contextual information - providing the operational landscape, and boundaries of, subject discipline. This includes consideration of the ways in which the discipline addresses wider social goals specifically in relation to: equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI); the requirements of disabled students; education for sustainable development (ESD); and, enterprise and entrepreneurship.

Section 2 covers distinctive features of the course, including curriculum design, partnership arrangements, flexibility of delivery, progression and ongoing monitoring processes. Section 3 explains any features relevant to teaching, learning and assessment activities for the subject. Section 4 describes the benchmark standards of achievement reached by all graduates with a bachelor's degree with honours in the subject, with some subjects also including achievement at master's level.

Subject Benchmark Statements are published in QAA's capacity as a membership organisation on behalf of the higher education sector.



## Why study a degree in Linguistics?

Linguistics is concerned with the knowledge, structure and use of language. As a discipline, it involves the study of the human capacity for language in all its expressions (spoken, signed and written). This includes a structural dimension that asks what the universal building blocks of human language are and how these elements - sounds, signs, words - combine to generate meaning; the cognitive dimension of how the brain processes these; and the social, cultural and historical dimensions of how these systems form, how they are acquired, used and interpreted; as well as how they interact and evolve.

Linguistics degrees promote a unique combination of critical, creative and analytical skills that are valuable in a range of professional environments. This disciplinary diversity, coupled with the range of methodological approaches and theoretical stances used, fosters the development of a variety of transferable skills, knowledge and professional attributes. In the course of their studies, students develop capabilities that make them enquiring, critical, innovative, and able to find new and effective ways to create cultural, social or economic value. As a result, Linguistics graduates are in demand in a range of sectors and industries, such as publishing, journalism, technology, artificial intelligence, public relations, teaching, research, translation, interpreting, marketing and branding, the civil service, business, industry, social media, language consultancy, language teaching, speech and language therapy, data science and forensic science. Such roles enable them to apply their knowledge of language, as well as their skills in linguistic and statistical analysis.



## What are the main teaching and learning approaches in Linguistics?

Linguistics is inherently multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary, so different Linguistics courses vary in their structure and subject focus, particularly where Linguistics is studied in combination with another discipline. Owing to the breadth and diversity of its subdisciplines, Linguistics courses give students the opportunity to develop their skills and knowledge through a varied set of teaching styles and learning activities. This may include: lectures, seminars, practical classes and laboratory work, critical reading of core texts, workshops on research methods, verbal and/or non-verbal presentations, group and individual tutorials, peer-led or tutor-led collaborative group study, problem sets and short exercises involving data analysis, the use of specialist computer software and other relevant digital tools/resources, supervised independent learning, external placements, and the use of virtual learning environments.



## How are students assessed?

The assessment of Linguistics courses includes a mix of methods that are accessible to disabled students and students from varying educational and cultural backgrounds within different learning situations.

Where individual students may be disadvantaged by particular assessment methods, adjustments to those assessments are considered in discussion with the student concerned, while ensuring fairness across the full cohort. The procedures used for assessment cover the subject knowledge (breadth and depth), abilities and skills developed through the degree course.

Linguistics courses are typically innovative in the design of assessment, though different assessment methods will suit different modules and courses of study. Assessment methods include essays and other written reports, independent research projects and/or dissertations, individual and group project reports, seen and unseen examinations, presentations, short exercises and cumulative problem sets involving data analysis, qualitative or quantitative data collection and analysis, designing materials for specific professional or educational purposes, laboratory-based practical work, portfolios of work, critical reviews of research articles, creating online resources, critical self and peer-evaluation, and tasks aimed at the assessment of specific skills.



## Benchmark Standards

The minimum threshold standards that a student will have demonstrated when they are awarded an honours degree in Linguistics are outlined on **pages 17-19** of the Subject Benchmark Statement. The vast majority of students will perform significantly better than the minimum threshold standards. Each higher education provider has its own method of determining what appropriate evidence of this achievement will be and should refer to [Annex D: Outcome classification descriptions for FHEQ Level 6 and FQHEIS Level 10 degrees](#). This Annex sets out common descriptions of the four main degree outcome classifications for bachelor's degrees with honours - 1st, 2.i, 2.ii and 3rd.

The full statement was developed by subject experts drawn from across the sector. Details of the Advisory Group can be found on **page 20** of the full Statement.

### Read the full Subject Benchmark Statement

The [full Subject Benchmark Statement](#) is available on the QAA website.



*Photo: (PI Jessica Bradley) Multilingual Streets Project, 2019 - QAA would like to thank Dr Louise Atkinson, freelance artist-researcher, together with pupils and teachers from Burnage Academy*

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