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About this Statement

This document is a QAA Subject Benchmark Statement for Linguistics that defines what can be expected of a graduate in the subject, in terms of what they might know, do and understand at the end of their studies. Subject Benchmark Statements also describe the nature and characteristics of awards in a particular subject or area. Subject Benchmark Statements are published in QAA's capacity as a membership organisation on behalf of the higher education sector. A summary of the Statement is also available on the QAA website.

Key changes from the previous Subject Benchmark Statement include:

- a revised structure for the Statement which includes the introduction of cross-cutting themes of:
  - equality, diversity and inclusion
  - education for sustainable development
  - employability, entrepreneurship and enterprise education
- a comprehensive review updating the context and purposes of Linguistics, including course design and content in order to inform and underpin the revised benchmark standards.

How can I use this document?

Subject Benchmark Statements are often used by higher education providers in the design and development of new courses in the relevant subject, as they provide a framework for specifying intended learning outcomes in an academic or vocational discipline. They are also used as a reference point when reviewing or revalidating degree courses. They may be used by external examiners in considering whether the design of a course and the threshold standards of achievement are comparable with other higher education providers. They also provide professional, statutory and regulatory bodies (PSRBs) with the academic standards expected of students.

Subject Benchmark Statements provide general guidance for understanding the learning outcomes associated with a course but are not intended to represent a national curriculum in a subject or to prescribe set approaches to teaching, learning or assessment. Instead, they allow for flexibility and innovation in course design within a framework agreed by the subject community.

You may want to read this document if you are:

- involved in the design, delivery and review of courses in Linguistics
- a prospective student thinking about undertaking a course in Linguistics
- an employer, to find out about the knowledge and skills generally expected of Linguistics graduates.

Relationship to legislation

The responsibility for academic standards lies with the higher education provider which awards the degree. Higher education providers are responsible for meeting the requirements of legislation and any other regulatory requirements placed upon them by their relevant funding and regulatory bodies. This Statement does not interpret legislation, nor does it incorporate statutory or regulatory requirements.

The regulatory status of the Statement will differ with regard to the educational jurisdictions of the UK. In England, Subject Benchmark Statements are not sector-recognised standards
as set out under the Office for Students’ regulatory framework. However, they are specified as a key reference point for academic standards in Wales under the Quality Enhancement Review and in Scotland as part of the Quality Enhancement Framework. Subject Benchmark Statements in Northern Ireland are part of the current quality requirements in that nation. Because the Statement describes outcomes and attributes expected at the threshold standard of achievement in a UK-wide context, many higher education providers will use them as an enhancement tool for course design and approval, and for subsequent monitoring and review, in addition to helping demonstrate the security of academic standards.

Additional sector reference points

Higher education providers are likely to consider other reference points in addition to this Statement in designing, delivering and reviewing courses. These may include requirements set out by PSRBs and industry or employer expectations. QAA has also published Advice and Guidance to support the Quality Code, which will be helpful when using this Statement - for example, in course design, learning and teaching, external expertise and monitoring and evaluation.

Explanations of unfamiliar terms used in this Subject Benchmark Statement can be found in QAA’s Glossary. Sources of information about other requirements and examples of guidance and good practice are signposted within the Statement where appropriate.
1 Purpose of the Statement

1.1 The purpose of this Statement is to make explicit the context, content, scope, and the threshold standards of undergraduate degrees in the subject area of Linguistics. It aims to describe Linguistics as a dynamic and expanding discipline and is aimed at different audiences, including higher education providers, students, employers and career advisers.

1.2 While linguistics is traditionally understood as the scientific study of language, the development of this subject means that it currently comprises a highly diverse set of established and emerging fields that span the traditional domains of social sciences, humanities, arts and beyond, and explore the interfaces between them. The boundaries of the subject, as well as its relationship to cognate 'sub-disciplines' or 'sister-disciplines', such as 'applied linguistics', remain contested. The Statement uses the term 'Linguistics' to refer to a diverse subject with a conceptual breadth, methodological diversity and increasing interdisciplinarity, while acknowledging that the term attracts different approaches and interpretations in different higher education providers.

1.3 The Statement does not aim to present clear-cut boundaries of the subject area. Rather, it follows a ‘mapping the territory’ approach that is expansive, evolving and responsive to recent developments in the subject and the subject community. As part of this approach, Linguistics is described as consisting of three overlapping domains: theoretical linguistics, applied linguistics and critical linguistics.

1.4 This approach acknowledges the diversity and the dynamism of the subject and demonstrate how Linguistics responds to changing societal and entrepreneurial needs. It also foregrounds the heterogeneity of the subject and highlights its social utility.

1.5 One of the key features of this Statement is its commitment to demonstrating how Linguistics can engage with, and contribute to, the following defining principles:

- equality, diversity, and inclusivity
- accessibility
- education for sustainable development
- enterprise and entrepreneurship.

1.6 The diversity of the subject allows students of Linguistics to choose a course with an emphasis suited to their academic and professional aspirations.

1.7 This diversity is reflected in the wide range of courses offered by providers, and for this reason the Subject Benchmark Statement for Linguistics does not seek to provide definitive criteria for course design.

1.8 In 'mapping the territory', the Statement identifies elements that provide an academically rigorous study of language that is both traditional and cutting edge. A common feature of these elements is that they are ‘applied’ and ‘interdisciplinary’, often responding to contemporary challenges that are inherently linguistic in nature.

Context

1.9 The diversity of the subject and of the courses in which it features reflect the fact that Linguistics is commonly offered in combination with a suite of subjects such as English, TESOL, a foreign language, Business, and Politics. For an indicative list of the Linguistics course offerings in the sector, refer to Appendix 1.
1.10 These subject combinations create a wide range of contexts in which Linguistics provision operates, using three broad linguistic domains: theoretical, applied and critical. This classification is not always clearly defined, and many modules sit at the intersection of more than one domain. See section 3 for more detail on these linguistic domains.

**Defining principles**

1.11 The following sections present an evolving vision for how Linguistics as a discipline and a subject community engages with the defining principles of: (1) equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI), (2) accessibility, (3) sustainability, and (4) enterprise and entrepreneurship. Each section starts with a vision statement before it presents some contextual information about the discipline and how it can offer valuable contributions to these defining principles. The sections do not aim to present an exclusive approach or an exhaustive description of what Linguistics can do. Rather, they are intended to offer a fluid roadmap that responds to current disciplinary debates, while sketching out a broad and hopeful vision for the future of Linguistics.

**Equality, diversity and inclusion**

1.12 Linguistics, as an inclusive learning community, has a collective responsibility to embed equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) within its curriculum design, research traditions, disciplinary values, knowledge production, ethical protocols, pedagogies, assessments and learning environments. Members of the subject community become engaged in individual and collective learning which is central to embracing EDI and challenging conceptual and methodological biases.

1.13 Linguistics students and staff critically reflect on their own identities, backgrounds, worldviews and attitudes, and how they intersect with disciplinary norms. Linguistics historically struggled with decoloniality and resistance to new theorisations from colonised people. Because of what it is and what it does, its roots and its origins, the field of linguistics is often perceived and represented as a static and stable science, with knowledge constructed alongside binaries such as language-nation, culture-nature, standard-(non)standard, or mind-body, causing considerable fragmentation within the field.

1.14 Modern linguistics, however, challenges essentialist approaches to language. Many areas within Linguistics directly embed EDI in the subject knowledge. Awareness of EDI is enabled by engaging with areas such as language policies, the study of minority languages and of discursive representations of minority groups, mobility and social justice; educational linguistics; critical, socio-cultural approaches to researching language in society, including language, gender and sexuality studies; and raciolinguistics, among many other established and emerging areas of linguistic inquiry.

1.15 Central to the subject community is making explicit the implicit knowledge, resources, and practices that language users draw on every day. Language plays a central role in a range of complex social processes and challenges, including social transformation, social change, shaping narratives and affiliation; it opens and closes doors for civic participation and social emancipation. Linguistics articulates the link between social hierarchies that manifest themselves through language, and raises awareness about the symbolic power of language in transforming and manipulating social realities.

1.16 Creating learning environments and experiences which enable students to interact and collaborate within and across their courses increases their knowledge, skills and understanding of EDI topics and issues. Diverse student populations help the discipline in its quest to decolonise itself from the legacy of language coloniality.
1.17 Students’ learning is supported by a mix of traditional and innovative approaches to assessment. The use of assessments linked to real life experiences encourages students to make sense of the current social world, while appreciating the complexity of their discipline.

Accessibility

1.18 Linguistics, as an accessible subject community, embraces an inclusive understanding of language in all its modes (for example, written, spoken, sign) and explores how modes of expression intersect with cultures, histories, identities and societies. The subject community welcomes students from a wide range of educational backgrounds, and community engagement is facilitated through providing different accessible formats and reasonable adjustments.

1.19 Linguistics students work across a wide range of different environments and circumstances and are normally expected to become increasingly able to communicate professionally, with an appreciation of and respect for linguistic, social and cultural diversity. They are also encouraged and supported to be active learners and to develop self-confidence, critical understanding of their academic environment, and independence in their approach to learning.

1.20 Linguistics courses are designed to support student growth and development. It is often the case that diversity in students’ home environments (for instance, being a bilingual speaker) enriches the linguistics classroom, as linguistic diversity is a main focus for areas including sociolinguistics, multilingualism, language acquisition, and language learning and teaching.

1.21 Higher education providers are aware of students’ accessibility needs and the different levels of support necessary for the promotion of active engagement and inclusive participation of disabled students, using a combination of digital/virtual, face-to-face, synchronous or asynchronous teaching and learning support to ensure accessibility. Where digital content is used, this content is made available in a range of accessible formats. This includes using alternative formats (for example, transcripts, captions, notes) where necessary and appropriate to make digital content accessible and inclusive.

Sustainability

1.22 Linguistics, as a subject community committed to sustainability, offers important contributions to how sustainability can be embedded in teaching, learning, pedagogies, assessments and research traditions. Linguistics knowledge, skills and competencies can allow students to analyse the connection and intersection between economic, social, racial, political, cultural, linguistic and environmental factors, how they feed into the exploitation of nature, and how individuals and societies respond to environmental concerns such as the current climate emergency.

1.23 With its focus on language use, knowledge production and discourse analysis, linguistics presents significant and much-needed opportunities for transformative education on issues related to sustainability for three main reasons:

- Linguistics explores not only what language is, but also what language does in relation to transforming the social world. As a discipline, it recognises the role of language as a tool for manipulation, social transformation and persuasion, and hence it can analyse the role of language in constructing and responding to climate change, climate action and environmental concerns, while uncovering links between ecological vulnerability, societal vulnerability, racial vulnerability, and economic challenges and inequalities.
• Linguistics constitutes a dynamic field that engages with and addresses language-related concerns. As such, the discipline contributes to debates that problematise sustainability discourses, and challenge human exceptionalism and the unlimited and unconditional use of natural resources. These debates also emphasise the connection between language and land, and with that have the potential to promote links between the development of human societies and of the environment.

• Through engaging with decolonisation, linguistics offers an opportunity to open up the sustainability dialogue through acknowledging new kinds of knowledge (non-Western, non-white, indigenous), and new concepts from other languages that promote ‘good living’ for a better world and problematise the commonly celebrated concept of ‘development’ that might be interpreted as reinforcing infinite growth and unstoppable development.

1.24 Linguistics scholarship contributes to UNESCO’s education for sustainable development goals in numerous ways:

• Language, gender and intersectionality studies develop critical understandings of the concepts of gender, gender equality, gender discrimination as well as the exploitation of and violence against women and girls, and encourage self-reflection and comparison of gender norms in a range of cultural and social contexts (SDG5: Gender Equality).

• Multilingualism and understanding the relations between local and international languages is important for development, including economic and social development. Language skills are also important for economic growth and self-representation (SDG8: Decent Work and Economic Growth).

• Language and intercultural dialogue/communication are at the heart of developing peace, and strong and inclusive societies (SDG16: Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions).

• Language use, analysis and understanding is key to empowerment, opportunities, inclusion and equitable access. Particular attention to language and linguistic diversity should be given if we are to develop inclusive education for all (SDG4: Quality Education).

1.25 Basic principles for the subject’s engagement with sustainability include the following:

• language is crucial to discussions about sustainability and hope due to its power in articulating a vision of what can be done

• linguistics remains engaged with contemporary concerns not only due to its engagement with trans-disciplinarity but also because of its ability to revisit and rethink through different epistemological lenses and power influences

• education in Linguistics develops crucial skills related to linguistic analysis, self-awareness, strategic thinking and critical argumentation that are needed for transformative thinking in the face of the current climate emergency

• these competencies are identified by UNESCO as key for sustainability in education and they are part of the competencies usually taught and developed through education in linguistics.

Enterprise and Entrepreneurship Education

1.26 Enterprise and Entrepreneurship Education supports behaviours, attributes and competencies that are likely to have a significant impact on the individual student in terms of successful careers. It prepares students for changing environments, and provides enhanced impact through placements and activities that build links between academic institutions and external organisations.
1.27 Beyond employment, entrepreneurship education provides competencies to help students lead a rewarding, self-determined professional life, well placed to add social, cultural and economic value to society through their careers.

1.28 Linguistics, as a subject community committed to Enterprise and Entrepreneurship Education, encompasses varied subdisciplines that 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 in linguistics, 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.

1.29 These capabilities can result in the generation and application of ideas combining creativity, originality, initiative, idea generation, design thinking, adaptability and reflexivity with problem identification, problem solving, innovation, expression, communication and practical action (QAA 2018).

1.30 The linguistics curriculum develops students’ skills in a way that can have a significant impact on society, for example by challenging established language ideologies and attitudes, scrutinising and rationalising institutional policies and practices, identifying assumptions, premises or prejudices underlying discourses, critically evaluating theoretical positions and the data that drives them. Graduates should also be able to articulate and demonstrate these skills to potential employers, as well as other personal attributes and competencies that are likely to be useful within the workplace.

1.31 The modules undertaken throughout the course develop understanding of how language works and can provide opportunities to connect with external organisations as many courses offer placement opportunities. The enhancement of skills, knowledge and professional attributes are of ever-increasing importance to graduates.

1.32 Graduates develop a clear understanding of the importance of the link between language use and society and the ability to assess prevailing societal attitudes and behaviours using linguistic evidence.

1.33 Linguistics students also develop the skills to think and write (self-)critically, to engage in independent reflection and to present their ideas clearly and coherently in verbal and/or non-verbal formats. They learn how to compare and contrast theoretical explanations and support critical claims with reference to key methodological debates in linguistic research.

1.34 In addition, graduates also gain extensive subject-specific and general skills in information technology, including the ability to present information using digital tools and resources for language analysis, together with the collection, evaluation, synthesis and interpretation of both qualitative and quantitative forms of data from a range of public and professional contexts.

**Examples of fields linguistics graduates work in**

- Linguistics graduates are in demand in a range of sectors and industries, such as publishing, journalism, British Council roles, public relations, teaching, research, translation, speech scripting and transcription, advertising, the civil service, business, industry, social media, language consultancy, language teaching (English, ESOL, other languages), forensic linguistic, translation or interpreting and intelligence. Such roles enable them to apply their knowledge of language, as well as their skills in linguistic analysis.
A Linguistics degree also prepares graduates well for further study in a range of fields, such as applied linguistics, speech and language therapy, teaching or data science.

Due to the rise of internet-mediated communication and the wealth of written and spoken data linked to it, Linguistics graduates are increasingly employed in industries that make use of written and spoken data to inform their products and services. This includes, but is not limited to, educational technology, user experience research and speech recognition relating to artificial intelligence. Linguistics graduates are typically employed in these fields for their ability to analyse linguistic data and deduce patterns that can subsequently inform the work of programming or marketing specialists.

Due to the rise of on-demand online streaming services, Linguistics graduates are increasingly sought after to manage projects relating to the dubbing and international distribution of films and TV series or the management of international music or arts projects.

Overall, the ability of Linguistics graduates to analyse complex linguistic data, deduce patterns from such analyses and apply a range of data collection and analysis techniques makes them highly employable across a range of sectors.
2 Distinctive features of Linguistics

Design

2.1 The breadth of the Linguistics degree and its interdisciplinary nature are reflected in the design of linguistics courses. Courses provide a coherent set of core modules, research skills training, and a set of research-informed optional modules allowing students to build on increasingly more complex linguistic concepts and applications of the discipline as they progress through their studies. Courses allow opportunities to reflect critically on the nature of the subject, its theoretical underpinnings, practical applications and ethical dimensions.

2.2 Course design also supports the development of independence of thought and critical awareness as students progress between levels. At the end of their degree, students may complete an extended piece of work, often, but not always, referred to as a dissertation or a final-year project, where the student is enabled to formulate, execute and complete an independent piece of linguistic research under appropriate supervision.

Progression

2.3 Linguistics courses differ in the types of core and optional modules offered by different institutions. This variety and flexibility is a distinguishing feature of linguistics, and there is no single model of sequential study to follow for institutions offering linguistics as a degree. Individual institutions determine how a given linguistics course facilitates progression over the period of study.

2.4 Over the course of a degree with honours (FHEQ Level 6; FQHEIS Level 10) linguistics students will progress from one level of study to the next, in line with the regulations and processes for each institution. However, it is expected that each level would see the progressive attainment of knowledge, skills, expertise and experience that build towards the final achievement of meeting the threshold-level subject skills listed in this Statement.

2.5 Typically, this is reflected in increasing levels of sophistication in the understanding of knowledge and concepts from the fields of Linguistics and related disciplines, where appropriate, the development of a set of core research skills which are reinforced and developed at each level, the analysis and interpretation of linguistic data, the ability to see the relevance of Linguistics to wider applications beyond the intellectual pursuit of the course, and an increased capacity for sustained written and/or oral argumentation. The course builds towards greater independence in learning that is typically marked by the completion of a dissertation or independent linguistics research project. Ultimately, upon graduation from an undergraduate degree, a student who achieves a second-class degree or higher is capable of, and equipped for, undertaking postgraduate study in Linguistics or an associated discipline. Entry requirements to postgraduate courses are, however, determined by individual providers and may require specified levels of achievement at undergraduate level.

2.6 Undergraduates studying a combined, joint or major-minor route will achieve core elements of the specific and generic skills for the subject, and will add others according to the requirements of the relevant joint courses. Additionally, they may explore the overlap between their two subject areas via interdisciplinary study.

2.7 While linguistics courses are typically a three-year undergraduate honours degree (or a four-year course if a placement/sandwich year or Year Abroad is included), students may exit earlier and be eligible for a Certificate in Higher Education, a Diploma in Higher Education, or an honours degree depending upon the levels of study completed to a
satisfactory standard. Scottish bachelor’s degrees with honours are typically designed to include four years of study, which relates to the structure of Scottish primary and secondary education. For students following part-time routes, their study time would be the equivalent of the three or four-year degree.

2.8 As funding models change and develop, it will increasingly be necessary for providers to consider the development of stand-alone ‘micro-credentials’ which may also contribute to more traditionally focused awards. These will need to be appealing to students in terms of professional and personal development, as well as contributing to the study of the subject, more generally.

Flexibility

2.9 Linguistics courses are flexible in providing choice on entry to allow for diversity in students’ educational backgrounds. Some courses do not list specific subject criteria for entry. Individual institutions provide such information clearly in their entry requirements.

2.10 Flexibility in content, modes of delivery and timing allows linguistics modules to be taught and assessed in an increasingly flexible and accessible way that can accommodate the abilities and needs of individual students. Access to online provision and resources, supported by appropriate technology, facilitates the development and teaching of the subject.

2.11 The provision of accessible, inclusive and flexible content requires appropriate resources and training to ensure consistent high-quality content and delivery. Where the design includes digital technology, the diversity in students’ access to technology needs to be recognised in ways that do not disadvantage them in any way.

Partnership

2.12 Linguistics graduates develop a wide range of transferable skills and therefore enter a variety of occupations. As such, it is appropriate that they can engage in activities which will support them into diverse future careers. Institutions ensure that all students have equality of opportunity to engage in partnerships, where appropriate.

2.13 Courses can include a variety of partnership activities provided they meet some of the learning outcomes of a Linguistics degree. The guiding principle for these activities is that they enable students to either apply established linguistics skills developed during the course or to learn new skills which can be applied elsewhere in the linguistics curriculum.

2.14 Linguistics students often have a natural interest in language comparison and development. Mobility and exchanges across cultures and societies allow students to experience transnational teaching environments.

2.15 Even where mobility is not an integral element of a particular course, courses operating within a global context and with a focus on diversity of experience, whether face-to-face or virtual, enhance students’ teaching and learning environment.

2.16 Partnership with external organisations which offer teaching qualifications enhance the graduate outcomes of students on Linguistics courses with a teacher training focus, such as TESOL.

2.17 Feedback from employers indicates that Linguistics graduates bring a rich skill set of transferable skills which are highly valued. These include the ability for critical thinking and personal reflection, fluency in communication, and working both within teams and
Many of these skills can be enhanced through experiential learning offered by external partnerships or by elements within the curriculum.

**Monitoring and review**

2.18 Degree-awarding bodies, and their collaborative partnerships, routinely collect and analyse information and periodic course review according to their needs. They draw on a range of external reference points, including this Statement, to ensure that their provision aligns with sector norms. Monitoring and evaluation are a periodic assessment of a course, conducted internally or by external independent evaluators. Evaluation uses information from both current and historic monitoring to develop an understanding of student achievement or inform future course planning.

2.19 Externality is an essential component of the quality assurance system in the UK. Providers will use external reviewers as part of periodic review to gain an external perspective on any proposed changes and ensure threshold standards are achieved and content is appropriate for the subject.

2.20 The external examination system currently in use across the UK higher education sector also helps to ensure consistency in the way academic standards are secured by degree-awarding bodies. Typically, external examiners will be asked to comment on the types, principles and purposes of assessments being offered to students. They will consider the types of modules on offer to students, the outcomes of a cohort and how these compare to similar provision offered within other UK higher education providers. External examiners are asked to produce a report each year and make recommendations for changes to modules and assessments (where appropriate). Subject Benchmark Statements, such as this one, can play an important role in supporting external examiners in advising on whether threshold standards are being met in a specific subject area.

2.21 Courses with professional and vocational outcomes may also require evaluation and accreditation from professional and regulatory bodies. These are usually done through a combination of site visits and desk-based reviews.
3 Content, structure and delivery

Content

3.1 The content of linguistics courses varies from one provider to another and from one degree award to another within the same provider. Courses offered by individual providers reflect this. Introductory modules in linguistics tend to approach the study of language from traditional levels of linguistic analysis, specifically phonetics, phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics and pragmatics. These modules introduce core linguistic terms and concepts, often laying the foundation for modules that take further theoretical, applied and critical approaches to language study.

3.2 Modules broadly concerned with theoretical aspects of linguistics explore the nature of language knowledge, structure and use. Whether the focus of study is language structure as a product of human cognition or language use as a structured social practice, the guiding principle of theoretical linguistics is that the nature of linguistic behaviour can be explained through the development of theoretical models that can be systematically tested against empirical data using a range of methodologies.

3.3 Theoretical linguistics modules often focus on traditionally defined levels of language, such as sounds, words, phrases, sentences and discourse, and may also seek to understand the ways these elements are acquired by children and processed in the brain, and how they show variation and undergo change. There are strong links between linguistic theory and psychology, philosophy and cognitive science; by studying these modules, students gain interdisciplinary insights.

3.4 Modules broadly concerned with applied aspects of linguistics focus on the relationship between theory and practice. This involves examining language-related problems and addressing social and technological challenges that are inherently linguistic.

3.5 Modules related to applied linguistics tend to take the knowledge and insights from the way that language works (phonology, morphology, syntax, lexis, for example) and examine how this is relevant to the world around us. Other modules seek to produce new theorisations and conceptualisations based on researching a wide range of social phenomena in numerous social and professional domains. It can involve modules such as sociolinguistics, language variation, corpus linguistics, forensic linguistics, professional communication, TESOL, educational linguistics, discourse studies, intercultural communication, language acquisition and psycholinguistics, showing how interdisciplinary applied linguistics modules can be.

3.6 Modules broadly concerned with critical aspects of linguistics engage with the socio-cultural, political and ideological functions of language in shaping or challenging practices, binaries, boundaries, identities, norms and structures. Generally, these modules have significant overlaps with modules concerned with applied aspects of linguistics. Some modules describe the power of language in societies and how this intersects with local and global demands and tensions, or explore aspects related to language policies in public and private domains. Other modules foreground the role of language as a resource for individuals to position themselves in situational and sociocultural contexts, and as a powerful means to represent and position language users and events. With that, the critical perspectives centre language in use when attempting to understand the implicit knowledge, resources and practices language users draw on every day.

3.7 Critical linguistics employs a wide range of (socio)linguistic and discourse analytic frameworks and tends to offer students opportunities to draw on their own experiences, for example when reflecting critically on language variation, multilingualism, language policy, the
relationship between language, discourse/ideology and identity, and the role of language in relation to social justice, sustainability and climate change discourses.

3.8 In all courses incorporating linguistics, the teaching, learning and assessment methods are designed to achieve progression, coherence and balance and to reflect the specific aims, emphases and learning outcomes of the course. There are explicit links between teaching and learning methods and the specific aims, emphases and learning outcomes of the degree. Teaching, learning and assessment methods are designed to be appropriate for students’ stage of progression.

3.9 Students are provided at the outset of their course with full documentation informing them of its aims and emphases. Linguistics is inherently multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary, spanning the traditional humanities and social sciences, 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 demonstrating practical, subject-specific skills
- critical reading of core texts
- workshops on research methods
- verbal and/or non-verbal presentations, including visual presentation software
- group and individual tutorials
- peer-led or tutor-led collaborative group study
- the planning, design and execution of a group or individual research project or other type of rigorous inquiry
- 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
- the use of virtual learning environments.

3.10 Core principles of inclusivity within the learning environment underpin the design of teaching activities, ensuring that all students are equally enabled to achieve their potential through their teaching experiences and learning opportunities. An inclusive learning environment is supported by teaching methods that embody a sense of belonging and community among students and instructors by promoting engagement, interactivity, reflection and self-awareness.

Assessment

3.11 Degree courses contain explicit links between assessment strategies and the specific aims and learning outcomes of the course. Formative and summative assessments are appropriate for students’ learning needs and stage of progression.

3.12 Assessment formats are appropriate for the topic and, given that linguistics encompasses a wide range of subdisciplines and interfaces with other disciplines, a broad and varied set of assessment styles is encouraged. Different assessment methods may be required in order to evaluate, for example:

- students’ ability to describe and analyse specific properties of linguistic systems (including syntax and phonology)
• students’ understanding of abstract theoretical concepts that underpin language structure, language acquisition or language use
• students’ appreciation of the impacts of cultural, social, historical or political contexts on language
• students’ awareness and application of appropriate research methodologies in gathering and interpreting data
• students’ application of principles of language learning in the design and delivery of language education courses.

3.13 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, which may involve written, aural and verbal assessment
• individual and group 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, including web pages, websites, podcasts and wikis
• critical self and peer-evaluation
• tasks aimed at the assessment of specific skills (for example, transcription and information technology (IT) skills).

3.14 The design of assessment methods balances opportunities to demonstrate knowledge in diverse subject areas with opportunities to demonstrate subject-specific, practical and transferable graduate skills. Themes within linguistics afford varied opportunities for providers to elucidate the role of language within inclusivity and global sustainability, relating to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals such as quality education, work and economic growth, reduced inequalities, sustainable cities and communities, and gender equality. Course providers design assessments that determine students’ ability to relate topics in linguistics to global humanitarian themes of equality, diversity and sustainability, in order to promote positive sustainable change through students’ life and lifestyle choices.

3.15 The rationale for assessment is clearly presented to students and explicit assessment criteria support all forms of assessment: for some assessments, generic assessment criteria for assessed work at a particular level may be applicable but where generic criteria are not sufficient, task-specific assessment criteria are provided.

3.16 Assessment is not only evaluative but also formative and diagnostic; students receive constructive, detailed feedback on formative and summative tasks throughout their degree.
4 Benchmark standards

4.1 This Subject Benchmark Statement sets out the minimum threshold standards that a student will have demonstrated when they are awarded an honours degree in Linguistics. Joint and combined honours degrees draw on an appropriate subset of these skills. Demonstrating these standards over time shows that a student has achieved the range of knowledge, understanding and skills expected of graduates in Linguistics.

4.2 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, 2.1, 2.2 and 3rd.

Minimum threshold standards

4.3 The threshold standard is the minimally acceptable level of attainment achieved by an honours graduate.

On graduating with an honours degree in Linguistics, students should be able to:

- demonstrate knowledge of the fundamental analytical concepts and methods of inquiry appropriate to a Linguistics degree
- take a systematic approach to the identification, description and analysis of language phenomena
- ask motivated questions about language structure and use
- apply the basic techniques for collecting/eliciting and transcribing data specific to the various sub-disciplines of linguistics, including the use of language corpora, media, politics or advertising, elicitation tasks, introspection, laboratory experiments, questionnaires, interviews and other types of linguistic fieldwork
- apply analytical concepts specific to different levels of linguistic analysis to appropriate data sets
- formulate linguistic generalisations and to construct and test hypotheses within the scope of linguistics, using appropriate evidence
- evaluate alternative analyses of a given set of data, based on an understanding of how linguistic theories help to organise linguistic analysis and to determine what constitutes evidence
- evaluate alternative theories, drawing on an understanding of the nature of linguistic theory and of what constitutes an explanation within the scope of linguistics
- present linguistic data and analysis using the appropriate methods and conventions specific to each sub-discipline of linguistics, including bracketing, tree diagrams, formal logic, graphs, tables, matrices and specific transcription systems
- apply an understanding of how language works to principles of learning and teaching language, especially English as a second or foreign language
- utilise linguistic terminology, theory and research to address real-world challenges
- understand and communicate observations about the linguistic representations of ideology, power, social identities and realities
- analyse linguistic representations of minority groups in different regional, socio-cultural and situational settings
- discuss the role of decoloniality and its historical role in linguistics
- identify and examine examples of and reasons for language variation across situational, social, cultural, regional and historical contexts as well as multilingual and cross-cultural contexts
• evaluate the role language plays in shaping sociocultural norms, identities and realities in a range of public and private domains
• show some understanding of language use and ideologies in relation to globalisation, mobility, sustainability and social justice.

Generic skills

4.4 Degrees in Linguistics offer students the opportunity to develop many generic skills of value to employers. The following skills are of particular significance:

• hypothesis formulation and testing
• assessing the merits of contrasting theories and explanations
• verbal, non-verbal and graphical communication, employing format appropriate to the audience
• experimental design; the design and execution of research projects, individually and in groups
• understanding the appropriate and ethical use of evidence and data
• evaluating the merits of contrasting theories, explanations and evidence
• distinguishing descriptive systems from the data they describe
• abstracting and synthesising information; collecting, analysing and manipulating data of diverse kinds
• interpreting information presented in the form of diagrams, tables and graphs
• searching out and synthesising information occurring in a variety of formats, giving appropriate acknowledgments and lists of sources
• undertaking competent self-directed study and learning
• understand the importance of health and safety and of equality, diversity and inclusiveness in the work environment
• appreciate and engage in contemporary debates relating to sustainability, employability and global perspectives, including decolonisation and anti-racism
• appreciate the need to act in a sustainable manner and display ethical behaviour and conduct.
5 Membership of the Advisory Group

Membership of the Advisory Group for the Subject Benchmark Statement for Linguistics 2022

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Membership of the review group for the Subject Benchmark Statement for Linguistics (2019)
The fourth edition, published in 2019, was revised by QAA to align the content with the revised UK Quality Code for Higher Education, published in 2018. Proposed revisions were checked and verified by the Chair of the Subject Benchmark Statement for Linguistics review group from 2015.

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Membership of the review group for the Subject Benchmark Statement for Linguistics (2007)

This revision was conducted under the auspices of the Subject Centre for Languages, Linguistics and Area Studies Advisory Group for Linguistics chaired by Dr Paul Rowlett, University of Salford. The chairs of the British Association for Applied Linguistics, Linguistics Association of Great Britain, University Council for Modern Languages, and the Vice-President of the International Clinical Phonetics and Linguistics Association were also contacted and invited to contribute comments and suggestions.

Membership of the original benchmarking group for Linguistics (2002)

Details below appear as published in the original Subject Benchmark Statement for Linguistics (2002).

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Appendix 1: Indicative course titles

In April 2022, UCAS lists 768 undergraduate courses available that have Linguistics in the title. Linguistics is offered on its own as a single subject courses (BA(hons) Linguistics) but also in combination with a wide variety of other disciplines.

**In combination with directly related subjects such as** English language, Phonetics, Forensic Linguistics, TESOL, Deaf Studies; for example:
- BA(hons) English Language, Linguistics and TESOL
- BA(hons) English Linguistics with Forensic Linguistics
- BSc(hons) Experimental Linguistics
- BA(hons) Linguistics and Deaf Studies
- BA(hons) British Sign Language, Deaf Studies and Linguistics

**Linguistics in combination with languages such as** Arabic, Celtic, Chinese, Classics, French, Gaelic, German, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Latin, Portuguese, Spanish and Welsh; for example:
- BA(hons) Chinese and Linguistics
- BA(hons) Linguistics and Arabic
- BA(hons) Linguistics and Portuguese
- BA(hons) Latin and Linguistics

**In combination with humanities, cultural studies and social science subjects such as** Archaeology, Literature, Economics, Film Studies, Global Development, History, Communication, Media Studies, Journalism, Philosophy, Criminology, Politics, Psychology, Scandinavian Studies, Sociology, Social Anthropology; for example:
- BA(hons) Archaeology and Linguistics
- BA(hons) Criminology and Linguistics
- BA(hons) Economics and Linguistics
- BA(hons) Journalism and English Language & Linguistics

**In combination with other disciplines:**
- BSc(hons) Computing Science and English Language & Linguistics
- BA(hons) Linguistics with Data Science
Appendix 2: Signposting to other Subject Benchmark Statements

Linguistics relates to a variety of other disciplines. Relevant related Subject Benchmark Statements include:

- Anthropology
- Area Studies
- Criminology
- Communication, Media, Film and Cultural Studies
- Computing
- Creative Writing
- Early Childhood Studies
- Education Studies
- English
- Geography
- Languages, Cultures and Societies
- Philosophy
- Psychology
- Sociology
- Welsh