



Subject Benchmark Statement: English

The Basics

This document is a summary of the Subject Benchmark Statement for English. 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 English?

English is the study of language, of literary and cultural works, and the production of critical and creative work. Students of English explore meaning through communication and develop their understanding through creative, critical and analytical responses. This develops students' abilities to communicate, collaborate, create and think critically - enabling them to grow as individuals, to undertake a broad range of careers, and contribute effectively to society and the economy.

English courses vary greatly in design and structure, and work well in combination with other subjects. The study of **English Language** involves the analysis of spoken, written and multimodal communication and culture. Courses explore the origins and historical development of the English language and its varieties, the many factors that shape its use, and its potential future forms. The study of **English Literature** involves the close, analytical reading and interpretation of prose, poetry and drama, and may include performance, visual, aural, digital and multimodal media. It explores the interconnections between texts, and the interaction of literature with social, historical, theoretical and cultural contexts. The study of **Creative Writing** involves the development of individual writing, informed by reading. Creative Writing students write and evaluate their own creative work, and that of others, using the analytical tools and approaches common to the study of language and literature, but seen from the perspective of practice. In doing this, they gain insights into themselves, others, their own creative work and the wider world.



What are the main teaching and learning approaches in English?

Communication and discussion of ideas are central to the subject so, while English uses many different approaches, all aim to develop dialogue and debate, encourage collaboration, explore the value of diverse life experiences and help students understand different perspectives. Small-group teaching (seminars, tutorials, workshops) is particularly popular in English because of the opportunities it provides for dialogue and discussion. Other teaching activities include lectures, personal supervision, performances, field trips and structured online work. Collaborative and individual independent study of texts and materials is fundamental to the subject and this preparation is clearly structured through detailed guidance. The subject makes extensive use of libraries, archives and digital resources.



How are students assessed?

English encourages a diversity of assessment types: this diversity develops the students' ability to communicate, collaborate, create and think critically. Assessment may include essays, independent research projects, portfolios of creative or critical writing, exams, presentations, producing editions of literary texts, web pages, blogs, videos, podcasts and more. This mix of methods mean that the discipline is accessible to students with disabilities and students from varying educational and cultural backgrounds. 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, abilities and skills that students develop as they progress through the course.



Benchmark Standards

The minimum threshold standards that a student will have demonstrated when they are awarded an honours degree in English are outlined on **pages 13-18** 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.



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