

A photograph of two young men in a library. They are standing in front of tall bookshelves filled with books. The man on the left is holding an open book and looking at it, while the man on the right is looking at the same book. The bookshelves are made of dark wood and have many books on them. The lighting is warm and focused on the students.

# Subject Benchmark Statement: Librarianship, Information, Knowledge, Records and Archives Management

## The Basics

This summary is designed to provide a short and accessible overview of the Subject Benchmark Statement for Librarianship, Information, Knowledge, Records and Archives Management for students, employers and academics. It is not intended to replace or alter the 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: equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI); accessibility and the needs of disabled students; education for sustainable development (ESD); enterprise and entrepreneurship; and the impact of generative artificial intelligence on the subject practice.

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.



## **Why study a degree in Librarianship, Information, Knowledge, Records and Archives Management?**

All contemporary Librarianship, Information, Knowledge, Records and Archives Management degrees prioritise design principles which ensure information systems and services are usable by individuals with diverse abilities and needs. In addition, degrees in this discipline typically include some or all of the following characteristics:

- An interdisciplinary focus ensuring content from fields such as data science, public policy, digital humanities or pedagogical design and theory and, where appropriate, featuring collaborative projects with students from other disciplines.
- A focus on the legal and ethical responsibilities of information professionals and organisations, the importance of supporting human rights and equalities legislation and their place in the information landscape, especially around concepts such as user privacy, intellectual freedom, intellectual property and freedom of access to information.
- A focus on data ethics and the development and understanding of responsible data practices.
- Theoretical and practical balance, incorporating case studies and problem-based learning to connect theories to real-world scenarios, and facilitating, where appropriate, opportunities for work experience, internships or research projects that offer hands-on experience within information organisations.
- Emphasis on user experience (UX) involving user testing and participatory design methods, to create intuitive interfaces and services.
- Attention to social justice, integrating discussions of bias in information systems, and a liberated focus on information equity issues; this involves the consideration of issues such as decolonising information practices, challenging power structures within knowledge systems related to biases including disability and gender, and designing a sustainable information infrastructure.
- Technological fluency, building in course coverage of data visualisation, programming for information management, and web accessibility.
- Focus on lifelong learning, fostering connections with professional and sector associations to encourage networking and access to continuing education opportunities.



## **What are the main teaching and learning approaches in Librarianship, Information, Knowledge, Records and Archives Management?**

Teaching and learning across the discipline is undertaken in a variety of modes including face-to-face, distance, hybrid, and blended styles. A high degree of emphasis is placed on the acquisition and development of both theoretical and practical skills to develop flexible, reflexive and skilled professionals.

Teaching may take a range of forms to enable students to learn in ways that suit their individual learning styles wherever possible. To this end, teaching may include traditional lectures and seminars; case study and problem-based learning; practical projects in the classroom, lab, or with professional partners; and learning in the workplace.

Students are supported to become independent learners so that they have the skills and knowledge for self-development on graduation. Independent learning may take many forms but can include guided reading outside of the classroom, seminar preparation, leading sessions and workshops, and independent research projects.



## How are students assessed?

Students undertake a range of authentic assignments which are grounded in relevant workplace and sector contexts, and enable them to demonstrate the wide variety of professional competencies and soft skills required in the information sector, specifically, and in relation to employability more broadly. These will include assessments which:

- allow a student to develop and demonstrate professional competencies, for example through portfolios, synoptic assessment and self-reflection
- provide the opportunity for reflexive and critical evaluation of professional and sector identity, professional development and a student's learning journey, for example through critical reflections, presentations or case studies
- enable students to engage in authentic assessment and apply learning which makes a meaningful contribution within sector or workplace settings, or in social environments and contexts, by engaging in practical projects, placements or producing project-related documentation
- demonstrate an ability to work collaboratively and effectively as part of a group through, for example, group projects, presentations or portfolios
- demonstrate the ability to use digital technologies, including use of generative AI, for the creation of websites, databases, online catalogues, presentations, posters, social media outputs and/or other digital content
- enable students to conduct research, involving primary data collection or extensive interrogation and synthesis of secondary data, data analysis and presentation of findings.



## Benchmark Standards

The minimum threshold standards that a student will have demonstrated when they are awarded an honours degree in Librarianship, Information, Knowledge, Records and Archive Management are outlined on **pages 16-19** of the Subject Benchmark Statement. The minimum standards that a student will have demonstrated when they are awarded a postgraduate certificate, postgraduate diploma, or a master's degree in Librarianship, Information, Knowledge, Records and Archive Management are outlined on **pages 19-22** 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 in The Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications of UK Degree-Awarding Bodies](#). 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.

The full statement was developed by subject experts drawn from across the sector. Details of the Advisory Group can be found on **page 24** of the Statement.

Subject Benchmark Statements are published in QAA's capacity as an expert quality body on behalf of the higher education sector.

### Read the full Subject Benchmark Statement

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

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

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