



Subject benchmark statement

Classics and ancient history (including Byzantine studies and Modern Greek)

Draft for consultation

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How can I use this document?

This document is a subject benchmark statement for classics and ancient history (including Byzantine studies and Modern Greek), 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.

You may want to read this document if you are:

- involved in the design, delivery and review of programmes of study in classics and ancient history (including Byzantine studies and Modern Greek or related subjects
- a prospective student thinking about studying classics and ancient history (including Byzantine studies and Modern Greek), or a current student of the subject, to find out what may be involved
- an employer, to find out about the knowledge and skills generally expected of a graduate in classics and ancient history (including Byzantine studies and Modern Greek).

Explanations of unfamiliar terms used in this subject benchmark statement can be found in QAA's glossary.¹ QAA has also published a general guide to quality assurance in higher education.²

¹ The QAA glossary is available at: www.qaa.ac.uk/aboutus/glossary

² A general guide to quality assurance can be found at: www.qaa.ac.uk/AssuringStandardsAndQuality/what-is-quality

About subject benchmark statements

Subject benchmark statements form part of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (Quality Code) which sets out the Expectations that all providers of UK higher education reviewed by QAA are required to meet.³ They are a component of *Part A: Setting and maintaining academic standards*, which includes the Expectation that higher education providers 'consider and take account of relevant subject benchmark statements' in order to secure threshold academic standards.⁴

Subject benchmark statements describe the nature of study and the 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 programme of study.

Subject benchmark statements are used as reference points in the design, delivery and review of academic programmes. They provide general guidance for articulating the learning outcomes associated with the programme 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 programme design within a framework agreed by the subject community. Further guidance about programme design, development and approval; learning and teaching; assessment of students; and programme monitoring and review is available in *Part B: Assuring and enhancing academic quality* of the Quality Code in the following Chapters:⁵

- *Chapter B1: Programme design and approval*
- *Chapter B3: Learning and teaching*
- *Chapter B6: Assessment of students and accreditation of prior learning*
- *Chapter B8: Programme monitoring and review.*

For some subject areas, higher education providers may need to consider other reference points in addition to the subject benchmark statement in designing, delivering and reviewing programmes. These may include requirements set out by professional, statutory and regulatory bodies, national occupational standards and industry or employer expectations. In such cases, the subject benchmark statement may provide additional guidance around academic standards not covered by these requirements.⁶ The relationship between academic and professional or regulatory requirements is made clear within individual statements, but it is the responsibility of individual higher education providers to decide how they use this information. The responsibility for academic standards remains with the higher education provider who awards the degree.

Subject benchmark statements are written and maintained by subject specialists drawn from and acting on behalf of the subject community. The process is facilitated by QAA. In order to ensure the continuing currency of subject benchmark statements, QAA initiates regular reviews of their content, five years after first publication, and every seven years subsequently.

³ www.qaa.ac.uk/qualitycode. The Quality Code aligns with the *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area* (www.enqa.eu/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/ESG_3edition-2.pdf).

⁴ www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Pages/Quality-Code-Part-A.aspx

⁵ Individual Chapters are available from www.qaa.ac.uk/AssuringStandardsAndQuality/quality-code/Pages/Quality-Code-Part-B.aspx.

⁶ See further *Part A: Setting and maintaining academic standards*: www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Pages/Quality-Code-Part-A.aspx.

Relationship to legislation

Higher education providers are responsible for meeting the requirements of legislation and any other regulatory requirements placed upon them, for example by funding bodies. The Quality Code does not interpret legislation nor does it incorporate statutory or regulatory requirements. Sources of information about other requirements and examples of guidance and good practice are signposted within the subject benchmark statement where appropriate. Higher education providers are responsible for how they use these resources.⁷

Equality and diversity

The Quality Code embeds consideration of equality and diversity matters throughout. Promoting equality involves treating everyone with equal dignity and worth, while also raising aspirations and supporting achievement for people with diverse requirements, entitlements and backgrounds. An inclusive environment for learning anticipates the varied requirements of learners, and aims to ensure that all students have equal access to educational opportunities. Higher education providers, staff and students all have a role in, and responsibility for, promoting equality.

Equality of opportunity involves enabling access for people who have differing individual requirements as well as eliminating arbitrary and unnecessary barriers to learning. In addition, disabled students and non-disabled students are offered learning opportunities that are equally accessible to them, by means of inclusive design wherever possible and by means of reasonable individual adjustments wherever necessary.

⁷ See further the *UK Quality Code for Higher Education: General Introduction*: www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Pages/Quality-Code-introduction.aspx.

About this subject benchmark statement

This subject benchmark statement refers to bachelor's degrees with honours in classics and ancient history (including Byzantine studies and Modern Greek).⁸

This version of the statement forms its third edition, following initial publication in 2000 and review and revision in 2007.⁹

Summary of changes from the previous subject benchmark statement (2007)

The subject benchmark statement for classics and ancient history (including Byzantine studies and Modern Greek) was first produced in response to an invitation from QAA by a committee set up by the Council for University Classical Departments (CUCD) in association with the Society for the Promotion of Byzantine Studies (SPBS) and the Standing Committee on Modern Greek in Universities (SCOMGIU). In 2005, in line with QAA's original commitment to oversee the review of existing subject benchmark statements every five years, CUCD established a small committee for the purposes of revising the existing subject benchmark statement, in consultation with SPBS and SCOMGIU. In 2014, a second revision was carried out by a committee on which CUCD, SPBS and the Society for Modern Greek Studies were all represented.

The subject benchmark statement for classics and ancient history (including Byzantine studies and Modern Greek) continues to fulfil its original intention, which can be summarised as follows:

- to make explicit the nature and standards of awards that carry the subject in their title
- to acknowledge the difference and diversity of programmes within agreed limits set by the subject community itself
- to provide scope for variety and flexibility in the design of programmes and encourage innovation within an agreed conceptual framework
- to explain the conceptual framework which gives the subject its coherence and identity
- to set out the attributes and capabilities expected of graduates, in order to represent the general expectations of standards in awards
- to guide internal and external review of programmes.

During the revision process of 2014 the review group were fortunate to be able to refer to the subject benchmark statements drawn up for cognate subjects and on the experience of some of those engaged in revising them. The review group considers that classics and ancient history (including Byzantine studies and Modern Greek) as a subject has horizons, not frontiers, and commends much of the advice included in those other subject benchmark statements: especially those drawn up for history, archaeology, philosophy, languages and related subjects.

⁸ Bachelor's degrees are at level 6 in *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (2008) and level 10 in the *Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework* (2001).

⁹ Further information is available in the *Recognition scheme for subject benchmark statements*: www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Pages/Recognition-scheme-for-subject-benchmark-statements.aspx.

The existing subject benchmark statement has been subject to only minor changes largely to reflect developments in the recruitment and teaching of the subject, including:

- current terminology in the subject (for example the increased use of the term Late Antiquity)
- the preferred QAA terminology and appropriate reference to the Quality Code
- new pedagogical techniques and resources (for example those associated with digital humanities)
- emergent areas of research and teaching, notably the growth in reception studies
- the changing curriculum at lower education levels and student progression routes into the subject
- increased engagement of programmes with cognate subjects.

1 Introduction

Definition of the subject area

Description in terms of content

1.1 The circumstances of the benchmarking group's constitution and the lengthy title adopted - 'classics and ancient history (including Byzantine studies and Modern Greek)' - indicate that description of the subject area cannot be altogether straightforward. In brief, the subject area embraces at least two distinct, though by no means unrelated, components, which give it a chronological span of at least four millennia. Although 'classics and ancient history' is often employed in this document as a shorthand to refer to the subject area as a whole, 'classics' is properly a conventional designation for the culture of Greco-Roman antiquity, and its reception in later periods. In this usage, 'classics' expresses the key notion that gives unity to most programmes in the subject area. Chronologically it embraces a period conventionally reckoned as extending from the late Bronze Age to Late Antiquity. Programmes in the subject area often include material which lies outside these limits, and may deal with cultures other than those of Greece and Rome, and with cultural interactions within a wider Mediterranean world.

1.2 'Byzantine studies' is concerned with the civilisation of late antique and medieval Byzantium/Constantinople between its refounding by Constantine in AD 324 and its conquest by the Turks in AD 1453, while 'Modern Greek' designates study of the Greek-speaking world (including the Greek diaspora) from the late medieval period onwards.

Description in terms of honours programmes

1.3 Within the field of classics as generally understood (paragraph 1.1), the following are the principal honours degree programmes available to students. In practice these represent different strands, and individual students often combine elements from two or more in the course of their studies, whether through joint degree programmes such as Latin and Ancient History or Classical Archaeology and Ancient History, or within broader degree programmes.

- Classics generally designates a programme in which students are required to acquire and show proficiency in both the Ancient Greek and the Latin languages, and may, at least at the beginning of their studies, make Greek and Latin literature their main but by no means exclusive focus. As such, classics is differentiated from classical studies.
- Latin and Greek designate programmes of the same general kind as classics, but concentrating on the language, literature and civilisation of ancient Rome and ancient Greece respectively.
- Programmes in classical studies (alternatively classical civilisation) are designed to offer students a broad understanding of the culture of Greco-Roman antiquity as a whole, in all its different aspects and their interrelations. Those entering classical studies programmes may have no prior knowledge of Ancient Greek or Latin, but are commonly given the opportunity to begin learning either or both if they have not already done so. Programmes in classical studies often share common elements with programmes in classics and/or ancient history and classical archaeology.
- Programmes in ancient history are generally concerned with the political, military, economic social and cultural history of the Greco-Roman world. They characteristically focus on major sub-periods within the classical period as defined in paragraph 1.1, and on the methodological problems involved in studying a historical culture, with a greater or lesser emphasis on the interpretation of a range

of forms of material evidence. Programmes in ancient history may, but do not necessarily, involve the study of Ancient Greek or Latin.

- Programmes in classical archaeology typically offer students engagement with a broad range of material culture, including but not limited to the art of the ancient Mediterranean world. Students taking programmes of this kind acquire a range of skills from art criticism to the handling of different kinds of archaeological material, often including scientific and quantitative techniques as well as archaeological theory and method. Classical archaeology is often combined with elements of ancient history or general archaeology programmes.

1.4 Programmes in Late Antique as well as in Byzantine studies may pay special attention to literature, theology or culture, or to history, archaeology or art history of the Byzantine period. Programmes in Modern Greek require proficiency in the modern Greek language, and take as their main concern the language, literature, thought and history of the Greek-speaking world since the later middle ages.

Scope of the subject benchmark statement

1.5 This subject benchmark statement makes its main focus the knowledge, abilities and qualities of mind which an honours graduate in the subject area may be expected to exhibit. Comment in the document on principles of a programme is mostly included either as context for the description of graduate attributes or as indicators of the ways in which higher education providers go about ensuring that their graduates acquire those attributes. Definition of the standards for the award of honours degrees in terms of programme content is a proper matter for autonomous degree-awarding bodies to determine in the light of their own mission statements

1.6 By virtue of its limited terms of reference, the subject benchmark statement is not the place to attempt a comprehensive account of the fundamental aims of honours degree programmes in classics and ancient history. A brief indication of the larger picture is nonetheless essential. It is a fundamental assumption of a liberal approach to education that language, literature, thought, art and history are worthwhile and compelling subjects of study and understanding in and for themselves. All honours degree programmes in the arts and humanities accordingly have as their principal aim the goal of enabling students to attain such understanding, to appreciate the values of its objects, to learn to think critically and therefore to be responsible citizens, and to enjoy the life of the mind. For this reason, honours degree programmes in these subject areas make a substantial contribution to the enhancement of the quality of life of their students.

1.7 Someone who achieves this understanding, appreciation and enjoyment is likely to have developed a variety of particular personal attributes. To foster such personal development is another major aim of honours degree programmes in arts and humanities, but students who do not develop a love for their subject on its own terms do not readily develop the abilities and qualities of mind which grow through engagement with it. This subject benchmark statement offers an analysis of those abilities and qualities of mind associated with the subject area of classics and ancient history (including studies in Late Antiquity, Byzantine studies and Modern Greek). In doing so the document necessarily disaggregates a whole which is greater than the sum of its parts. Where lists are constructed in the sections which follow, these should be read like listings of orchestral players on a concert programme: each item has a value of its own, but its main value resides in its interplay with the other items and its contributions to a single complex attribute - the mind of the graduate.

Governing principles

1.8 In specifying benchmark information for classics and ancient history the following principles have been followed,

- Benchmark information is expressed at a level of generality applicable to all the programmes - whether for single or joint/combined honours - which fall within the subject area, not separately for specific types of programme.
- Benchmark information is sufficiently flexible to accommodate the need for programmes within the subject area to respond to developments in research and scholarship, in student background (including general education examination qualifications and subsequent experience), student interest and demand, educational method, and technology.
- The range, complexity and diversity of the subject area make it appropriate that a wide range of diversity, both within a higher education provider and across different providers is exhibited.

Organisation of the subject benchmark statement information

1.9 The information presented in this subject benchmark statement is couched mainly in descriptive, not prescriptive, language. It is conceived as guidance for the various parties to whom it may be of interest.

1.10 Section 2 offers a characterisation of the subject area as a field of study. It stresses the diversity both of the subjects that fall within the field and of the academic backgrounds and of the orientations of the students who study them, as well as the coherence which single honours degree programmes aim to achieve, and which functions as a point of reference for classical components in joint or combined honours programmes.

1.11 Section 3 describes the personal attributes of an honours graduate in the subject area. These attributes divide broadly into:

- knowledge and abilities specific to honours graduates in the subject area
- core skills and qualities of mind developed by study in the subject area, but expected of honours graduates in all subject areas, such as intellectual, organisational and interpersonal skills, and skills in communication.

1.12 Section 4 discusses briefly the arrangements for progression, then the study methods and lastly the methods of assessment characteristic of programmes in the subject area.

1.13 Section 5 sets out threshold and typical standards of attainment by honours graduates in the subject area. These are expressed in terms of personal attributes.

2 Classics and ancient history (including Byzantine studies and Modern Greek)

A conspectus of the subject area

Historical significance

2.1 The classical world did much to shape the growth of early Christianity, the development of Judaism, and the contours of the medieval Islamic cultures of the near East, North Africa and Spain, as also those of Byzantium, Tsarist Russia and the Orthodox world. Its language, literature, history, philosophy, law, science and medicine, art and architecture have been studied continuously in Western Europe, particularly since the Renaissance, and are now the subject of learning, teaching and research throughout the world. It has had a major impact on the later history of ethics, politics and social thought and continues to stimulate the imaginations of thinkers and creative artists around the globe. Because of the breadth of its historical significance and its reception, the subject area has a particularly attractive and important contribution to make in a multicultural society.

Influence on modern education

2.2 Engagement with the cultural products of Greco-Roman antiquity has informed a wide range of other arts and humanities subjects and their development. The study of the classics is in itself a subject of study which illuminates understanding of Western and Byzantine civilisation over a long time-span. It has done much to shape our conceptions of what an educational system should be; and it constitutes the original paradigm of non-vocational training, to the extent that modern society's expectations of the general attributes of an honours graduate reflect those long associated with the notion of classical education.

Subject breadth

2.3 The breadth of the subject area is readily apparent. At one end, the area of study may extend to Ancient Egypt, the Ancient Near East and the Bronze Age cultures of Crete and Greece. At the other, Greek and Roman civilisation (whose study potentially encompasses a huge geographical area, centred on the Mediterranean world but extending as far as Britain and the Black Sea, Scandinavia and North Africa and from India to Spain) transmutes into early Christianity and Byzantium, and into the Ottoman and Russian Orthodox and Mediterranean Islamic cultures, the middle ages and Renaissance in Western Europe. It also includes the study of contemporary receptions of classical culture from modern Greek language, literature and culture in Greece, Cyprus and the wider world, but also engagements with classical texts, myth, art and other products on every continent.

Varying pathways

2.4 Varying pathways through these worlds result in the variety of honours degrees characteristic of the subject area. All involve mastering a number of distinct subjects. Some are typically more synoptic (classical studies/civilisation); more linguistic and literary (classics, Greek, Latin - including medieval and renaissance Latin - and modern Greek); more historical (ancient history, ancient and medieval history, East Mediterranean history, ancient and modern history); or more engaged with material culture (classical archaeology, art history). These pathways may be thought of as different intellectual routes into classical subjects, each with a distinctive emphasis. Honours degree programmes in Byzantine studies may fall under any of these headings.

Complexity and diversity of the subject area

2.5 Students of classics and ancient history are therefore confronted with an exceptionally complex range of subjects and cultural relationships. Different programmes of study focus on different combinations and opportunities are available within the field of classics (as ordinarily understood) and of Byzantine studies to:

- develop a command of two rich and complex ancient languages (in Byzantine studies more) which:
 - make searching demands of students in their own right, and require of them subject specific intellectual processes
 - develop a grasp both of the basic grammatical structure of Indo-European languages, the nature of the English language in particular, and foster skills applicable to other languages and to communication in general
 - despite similarities of origin and structure yield very different expressive resources
- study in depth an extremely varied body of literature that:
 - is in continuous dialogue with itself and with world literature which has continued in dialogue ever since
 - offers some of the most influential examples of, for example epic, drama, oratory, historiography and love poetry in world literature
 - presents models of rhetorical expression which feed into the acquisition of persuasive written and oral skills, and develop a sense of the uses and especially the manipulation of language
 - offers the chance to develop skills in interpreting fragmentary texts, and problems of textual transmission and paleography
- come to terms with explorations of basic philosophical issues in their pioneering presentation by thinkers with very different cultural and linguistic assumptions from our own, engage with the arguments and analyses they put forward, and register the perennial importance for philosophy of their questions, methods and teachings
- understand the nature of the societies and political systems of ancient Greece and Rome, of the late antique Mediterranean, and of medieval Byzantium, how they developed, and the historical reasons for their development and impact on other cultures, and reckon with the legacy of the classical or Byzantine past in more recent democratic and non-democratic systems, acquiring skills in sifting and comparing different accounts, in evaluating and interpreting specific ancient testimony, and in employing a range of historical methodologies
- develop observational and interpretative skills with respect to material objects, comprehend the expression of ideas in visual form and the various artistic and material choices made by Greeks and Romans at different times, and appreciate their influence on subsequent cultures
- become familiar with a range of forms of material evidence for Greek and Roman civilisation and its ecology, including by engaging in field work or studying objects in museums, and achieve an understanding of how they can be exploited in combination with literary and documentary evidence (epigraphic, papyrological and legal), and become aware of the contribution new discoveries make to the evolutionary nature of studies in the subject area.

2.6 In Modern Greek programmes, there is an opportunity to acquire written and oral fluency in the language of modern Greek-speaking peoples and an understanding of their literature, history and culture.

Importance of primary materials

2.7 Programmes in the subject area all share in one way or another a concern - distinctive among subject areas in the arts and humanities - with study through primary materials: literary, documentary, art historical, archaeological, and on occasion including the study of actual papyri, inscriptions and manuscripts. There is often a realistic possibility of presenting all the surviving evidence relevant to a major problem, as is seldom the case for later historical periods. This is an important factor in empowering students of classics and ancient history to form their own judgements on key questions and issues.

Learning and teaching in relation to research

2.8 Although a classical canon has been studied over many centuries, new material continues to be discovered and the body of information available for study in all fields within the subject area is continually growing. Previously neglected areas - such as classical reception - are opened up as researchers put new questions to existing materials, while digital humanities makes more materials widely available. Programmes of study within the subject area are quick to respond to these developments in research, not least because at present all departments offering honours degree programmes in classics and ancient history are also research-active.

Openness

2.9 In a developing, responsive and highly research-active family of subjects, cross-fertilisation flourishes, enriching the pool of skills and experience on which students may draw. The subject is evolving and will continue to evolve, for example in relation to new critical traditions and methods. The formulations articulated in this document are accordingly designed to leave proper scope for higher education providers to maintain appropriate diversity of provision within it, in response to changing ideas and approaches, and in the light of the aims and objectives of their own mission statements.

Programmes of study: diversity and coherence

Diversity

2.10 As the diversity of the subject area will already have suggested, sources of diversity in programmes are various and complex. Major factors are:

- a focus on different eras within a substantial time frame stretching from the second millennium BC to the present
- varying geographical settings with which students of the subject area may be confronted
- an emphasis on different aspects of the civilisations and cultures studied within the subject area, as appropriate to them
- the availability of a wide range of literary, linguistic, philosophical, historical, archaeological and art historical methodologies
- different theoretical positions on what it is to understand a civilisation and its cultural products
- a need to offer multiple levels in language courses, required to match different degrees of prior experience and different rates of progression.
- particularly in ancient history, studies in Late Antiquity, Byzantine studies and Modern Greek the various organisational structures of different providers; for example, the majority of students exposed to Byzantine studies are found not in departments of classics and ancient history but in history, theology, art history or archaeology departments while students of Modern Greek are often located in

modern language departments and those studying ancient history in history departments.

Coherence

2.11 It is apparent that this subject benchmark statement cannot give specific guidance on how coherence is built into the construction of programmes within the subject area. However, it is essential that if students are to gain a proper appreciation of the classical or Byzantine world or of the modern Greek-speaking world, programmes are coherent. It is for providers to ensure balance and complementarity in their programme design, with regard both to the options available to students and to permissible combinations of options. Where this is achieved, honours graduates in classics and ancient history characteristically develop a broad and complementary range of knowledge and of intellectual abilities.

2.12 For classics and ancient history as ordinarily defined, the potential for such coherence is provided by the:

- close interrelationship of the worlds of Greece and Rome despite the language difference between them
- classical canon of authors, art objects and historical periods developed in the Byzantine and western European reception of Greco-Roman culture
- interdisciplinary character of the subject area: the same evidence is approached from varying perspectives (for example historical, literary and philosophical), and different methodologies (for example historical, archaeological and art historical) are employed within the same general area.

2.13 In Byzantine studies, a consensus has developed over time on the scope appropriate for undergraduate study in a field of huge linguistic and geographical diversity spanning a millennium. Coherence in programmes is fostered by the close collaboration between colleagues from different providers and across broader subject groupings that is often characteristic of minority subjects. In Modern Greek programmes, the potential for coherence derives principally from their focus on Greece and Greek-speaking areas of the world.

Student backgrounds and orientations

Educational backgrounds

2.14 The educational backgrounds of students working for qualifications in the subject area are extremely varied. The majority are still recent school leavers, but have studied under a wide range of national and international curricula. Some have studied Latin and/or Greek at school, many have taken examinations in ancient history and/or classical civilization. A growing proportion have relatively little prior experience of classical subjects but come equipped with a range of skills and acquired learning about other literatures, languages and historical periods. Many higher education providers offer a range of gateways into these subjects, both for students wishing to study the subject with limited previous experience and for students who wish to add study of the classical world to other programmes such as English, history, archaeology or philosophy. It is usually possible to begin the study of both classical languages at the start of, or during a degree programme.

2.15 The terminology applied to programmes is so variable that it is difficult to generalise about the differences between them. Many students enter higher education with a background in humanities often including some study of literature, history and modern or ancient languages. Programmes in ancient history, classical studies, Byzantine studies or Modern Greek do not generally make knowledge of Greek or Latin - or indeed any prior

acquaintance with the subject area - an entry requirement. Students who enter classics programmes often have some prior acquaintance with Latin or Greek or both, but they may have no formal qualification in either language. Entry requirements for programmes are determined by individual higher education providers. Alongside recent school leavers are significant numbers of mature students, and part-time students and distance learners also form important constituencies.

Student aspirations: discovering new talents

2.16 Students enter programmes in classics and ancient history with widely varying experiences, indeed sometimes narrow or non-existent, in the fields of study which are embraced by the subject area as a whole. They are accordingly more likely than many others in the area of the humanities or elsewhere to discover that their interests change and extend in scope after they have embarked upon their chosen programme. In the course of their studies, many discover new talents and wish to acquire these subjects appropriately. For example, an ability in Latin they did not expect, or an enthusiasm and aptitude for subjects such as archaeology, Greek philosophy or Byzantine art for which their previous education, or entry route, had given them little specific preparation.

Consequences for programme design: flexibility, balance, further study

2.17 Programmes allow for student choice at entry point and, subsequently, make provision for students to follow individual pathways of learning, so far as resources permit. If they are to make sense of the relationship between different elements available for study, an appropriate framework which allows considered and responsible choices is required. If structures are in place which ensure that within the full time span of a given programme every student follows a balanced and complementary range of modules, this provides students with the possibility of continuing with postgraduate study in the subject area, supplying graduate schools with the kind of evidence needed for judging the fitness of individual applicants.

No single model for a classics and ancient history graduate

2.18 A general conclusion from the considerations presented in this sub-section is that there can be no single model of what an honours graduate in classics and ancient history should be. But given the account of the subject area offered, it is to be anticipated that her or his experience of learning fosters the academic rigour, mental agility, openness to change and adaptability suggested by the analysis of graduate attributes in the following paragraphs.

3 Attributes of an honours graduate in classics and ancient history (including Byzantine studies and modern Greek)

3.1 QAA has encouraged benchmarking groups to focus on the attributes of an honours graduate in formulating subject benchmark statements. Given that there can be no one pattern to which an honours graduate in the subject area conforms, this section describes a cluster of abilities and forms of knowledge. Accordingly numerous 'models' of the honours graduate in classics and ancient history are conceivable. Honours graduates in the subject area acquire most or a majority of the following attributes, but at different levels and from different vantage points depending on the programmes of study, individual pathways and personal circumstances or capacities.

Subject-specific abilities and forms of knowledge

3.2 The following subject-specific abilities and forms of knowledge are characteristic of an honours graduate in the subject area of classics, ancient history, Late Antique studies, Byzantine studies and Modern Greek. In different fields within the subject area there are variations in the degree of importance to be attached to each of them and in the modes by which they are fostered. Moreover, opportunities and encouragement are provided within specific programmes for individuals to follow their own pathways and develop their own distinctive strengths. Honours graduates in the subject area will generally have:

- A1** acquired an understanding of another culture, whether focused on its literature, thought, art and religion, or its history and political and social organisation, or its material culture; demonstrated a critical engagement with it; and developed an informed sense of the similarities and differences between it and our own culture
- A2** a broad knowledge, developed within a coherent framework, of complementary subjects, drawn from such fields as language, literature, linguistics, philosophy, history, art and archaeology, or theme-based topics which cross the boundaries between them (such as religion, gender studies), and periods
- A3** knowledge of and be familiar with an appropriate and diverse range of primary materials, such as literary, philosophical and historical texts, art objects, archaeological evidence, inscriptions, newspapers, sound recordings and other digital media
- A4** command of a range of techniques and methodologies, including some or all of the following: bibliographical and library research skills, skills in reading and textual analysis, a range of historical methodologies including skills in analysing statements and making use of fragmentary evidence, the capacity to use databases and electronic resources, the visual skills characteristic of art criticism, the use of statistics (for example in archaeology), philosophical argument and analysis, an analytical grasp of language, skills in translation from and/or into Greek (ancient, medieval or modern) and/or Latin
- A5** an understanding of a range of viewpoints on problems of interpretation and evaluation, and an ability to adopt a variety of critical approaches to them drawn across the subject area.
- A6** acquired a level of intellectual independence necessary to research classical subjects, to formulate clear arguments based on classical subject matter and to present the results clearly both orally and in writing.

- 3.3 Many honours graduates in the subject area will also:
- A7** develop an analytical knowledge of Greek (ancient and/or medieval) and/or Latin, even where these are not compulsory elements in a programme of study (as they are not in some ancient history and classical studies programmes).
- 3.4 Those graduating from Modern Greek programmes will generally:
- A8** acquire a thorough knowledge of grammatical structures; a broad vocabulary and range of appropriate idioms; the ability to understand the spoken language; the active production of appropriate written and spoken discourses; a sensitive knowledge of register; and translation skills both from and into the Modern Greek language.

General abilities, qualities of mind, transferable skills and intellectual virtues: predominantly cognitive

3.5 By virtue of study in the subject area, honours graduates at the same time acquire a further range of general abilities and capacities, qualities of mind, transferable skills and intellectual virtues. These include the organisational and critical skills needed to research issues and to work creatively, and also the communicative skills necessary to convey to others the results of that research and creativity via a range of media. Critical thought, creativity and communication skills are among the key qualities graduates carry with them beyond their studies.

- 3.6 Pre-eminent cognitive attributes fostered by study in the subject area are:
- B1** significant degree of autonomy, manifested in self-direction, and intellectual initiative, both in learning and study and in the management of the time devoted to them
 - B2** capacity for critical reflection on the extent and limitations of how and what one has learned, discovered and understood
 - B3** capacity for critical judgement in the light of evidence and argument.

3.7 These qualities of mind presuppose a number of more specific abilities, listed here in an order representing the characteristic progress of some intellectual enquiries conducted in the subject area to:

- B4** gather, commit to memory, organise and deploy evidence and information and to show awareness of the consequences of the unavailability of evidence
- B5** extract key elements from complex information and to identify and solve associated problems
- B6** select and apply appropriate methodologies in assessing the meaning and significance of information
- B7** engage in analytical and evaluative thinking about texts, sources, arguments and interpretations, independently estimating their relevance to the issue in question, discriminating between opposing theories, and forming judgements on the basis of evidence and argument
- B8** engage in lateral thinking, making creative connections between ideas and information in different fields of study

B9 marshal argument lucidly, coherently and concisely both orally and in writing

B10 display critical appreciation and judgement of literature and art.

General abilities, qualities of mind and transferable skills: predominantly practical

3.8 Honours graduates generally through study in the subject area and often by participation in group activity, acquire the practical ability to:

B11 orally present material in a clear and effective manner, using audiovisual aids when appropriate, and relating it to the concerns of the audience

B12 present material in written form, with discrimination and lucidity in use of language, professional referencing, and clear and effective layout, including as appropriate tabular, diagrammatic or photographic presentation

B13 work creatively and flexibly, both independently and also collaboratively with others

B14 organise their work, conduct independent study, write and think under pressure and meet deadlines.

3.9 It is expected of honours graduates in the subject area that they will also be able:

B15 to make effective and appropriate use of digital resources and information technology at all stages of their work. Generally this includes the capacities to collect and evaluate digitized data, to use electronic texts and databases and their associated software, to make effective use of virtual learning environments and other e-pedagogy, to organise and present arguments, text and images electronically, to make creative and critical use of electronic media in communicating their work to others through a variety of formats, and to employ appropriate safety and security protocols in the course of their work.

3.10 Some will also command:

B16 modern foreign language skills, especially reading ability. Graduates will have been given opportunity and encouragement to acquire them where appropriate to their academic needs.

Particular employability skills

3.11 Graduates of programmes in this subject area are traditionally highly valued by employers for their very broad skills sets, developed through working with an unusually wide range of source materials that in turn require unusual levels of intellectual flexibility. Linguistic aptitude, critical analysis, high levels of creativity and skills in researching, organising and presenting material are useful in a wide range of employments. The qualities listed under B1-16 provide further exemplification of this.

3.12 Studying for a classics degree demonstrates willingness and ability to learn and to comprehend a breadth of challenging subjects. This intellectual flexibility is highly sought after by employers and common classics graduate jobs include advertising, accountancy, public relations and legal work (solicitors and barristers). The public sector also offers a variety of career paths including roles within government administration, research and information management.

3.13 There are also a range of employments that place special value on the subject-specific qualities listed under A1-7. These include (but are not limited to) the following:

- museums and galleries, international, national and regional, both curatorial positions and those concerned with outreach and increasing public understanding of the past and of visual and material evidence
- heritage management, international national and local public authorities, and for charities and commercial companies; including designing and managing the visitor experience and/or the production of textual and digital materials
- teaching at all levels from primary to higher education, including positions that involve some research
- the creative economy, especially publishing and media, including, but not exclusively editorial work, radio, TV and film production, translation, exhibition and event management
- (especially for Modern Greek) a range of governmental and commercial work from diplomacy to tourism using language skills and understanding of Greek culture.

3.14 In some cases a master's level qualification is required to enter some of these professions.

4 Teaching, learning and assessment

Programme design

4.1 The principal consideration governing design of programmes of study in classics and ancient history is the nature of the subject matter to be learned and taught and the nature of the specific skill sets required from this to take place. Other considerations include the knowledge and interests of members of teaching staff. This section of the subject benchmark statement does not attempt to cover such aspects of programme design. It is concerned with one specific issue: consideration of how programmes may best enable students to acquire the personal attributes described in section 3, and thereby exhibit fitness for that purpose in their arrangements for learning and teaching (particularly so far as concerns progression and study methods) and for assessment. The material in the section is mostly descriptive, and is intended to constitute broad guidance for higher education providers, external examiners and QAA reviewers.

Progression

Starting-point and end-point

4.2 Arrangements for learning and teaching are generally conceived in the light of reflection on the intellectual distance that each student needs to travel from his or her knowledge and abilities at entry to attainment of the attributes of an honours graduate. All students acquire knowledge during their studies, but the skills they develop vary enormously: this applies as much to generic abilities such as time management and writing skills as it does to specific skills such as translating Latin or dealing with the complex source material of ancient history. Students who enter higher education after a period of employment often have skills in self-motivation and organisation that those entering straight from school lack. Familiarity with digital media and information technology varies greatly. English comprehension and academic writing are easier for some students than for others. Higher education providers ensure suitable skills training, and teachers ensure that students have a realistic appreciation of their skill levels and needs and the means to achieve what they need. Ideally group-teaching and group-studying allows students to learn from each other, and by this means all may hope to realistically acquire the abilities detailed in section 3.

Independent learning and acquisition of new skills

4.3 The principal specific desideratum for any honours degree programme is that, at least towards the end of their studies, students have the opportunity to engage in independent research and learning, with limited guidance and within the broad structure of the programme, using and further developing the skills and abilities fostered up to that point. As is apparent from section 2, classics and ancient history is so broad in terms of subject matter and so rich in approaches which involve new ways of thinking, that it is appropriate for there to be scope for students towards the end of their studies to devote a proportion of their module choices to study involving the acquisition of knowledge, skills and abilities in fields they have not so far explored.

Example: acquisition of language skills

4.4 To take a particular example of great importance, wherever possible it is highly desirable that students who wish it are given opportunity and encouragement to acquire or improve linguistic skills in Greek (ancient, medieval or modern) and/or Latin - or in a Byzantine studies programme, Syriac or Hebrew for example - at any stage in their programme of study for an honours degree. Access to language modules which are

appropriate for this purpose is not denied to them solely on the ground that the students are at too advanced a point in their studies. Experience of these languages at any point in a programme may significantly benefit command of other subject-specific abilities and forms of knowledge characteristic of honours graduates in the subject area, as well as enhance development of more general abilities, such as the ability to analyse the logical structure of means of communication. Command of Greek and/or Latin is also an indispensable foundation for research degrees in many fields within the subject area and an invaluable asset for those entering master's degree programmes in it.

Example: classical or Byzantine art, or field archaeology

4.5 Other examples of the acquisition of new skills might be classical or Byzantine art, field archaeology or the kind of artefact studies for which museological training is required. For many students there may have been the opportunity to begin study of such subjects at an early point in their honours degree programme, and some go on to take more advanced and specialised options within them as they progress. In other well-designed programmes, however, this may not necessarily have been the case, and it may therefore be appropriate for students towards the end of their studies to be offered the opportunity to begin study of classical or Byzantine art, or to gain experience of field archaeology. Where possible, opportunities to work in museums, galleries and in archaeological companies and units may be made available to students who might benefit from them, whether on an occasional basis or via internships or vacation work experience.

Study methods

Wide range of study methods

4.6 A wide range of study methods are practised within the subject area, and in a rapidly changing general environment for learning, there is considerable potential for new developments, including use of databases, websites and other forms of computer-assisted learning. It is to be expected that a mixture of formal and informal study methods are appropriate, and that a balance is struck between structured arrangements and students' own input (compared to paragraph 4.2).

Examples of study methods

4.7 An honours graduate in the subject area will generally have had the opportunity to experience all or most of the following study methods:

- essay writing, often conceived as the principal vehicle for the development of most of the abilities and forms of knowledge listed under A and B in section 3
- various forms of exercise designed to develop the linguistic or critical or problem-solving skills identified under A and B, such as:
 - unprepared translation from Greek (ancient or modern) or Latin
 - translation into Greek (ancient or modern) and/or Latin
 - 'practical' literary criticism
 - short critical commentaries (gobbets)
 - source analysis
- the identification of and/or commentary upon art objects and other items of material culture
- use of a range of IT in programme delivery (for example in language learning, or through virtual learning environments) and provision for the learning skills in making use of digital resources appropriate to the subject area
- seminars or other forms of small group discussion, with or without individual or group presentations

- one-to-one interaction, between students and between students and teachers
- attending and making good use of formal lectures
- projects jointly undertaken with other students
- reports on investigations, whether undertaken independently or in the context of group discussion
- analysis of audio and visual materials, of films, moving images and other digital media
- first-hand analysis of material culture in the field and/ or in museums
- revision for formal examinations
- dissertations or projects, considered particularly valuable in encouraging self-direction and intellectual independence and initiative, as well as in requiring students to acquire research skills
- in Modern Greek radio and television programmes, feature films and websites in Greek.

4.8 Mention may also be made of arrangements special to particular fields within the subject area:

- in Modern Greek regular conversation practice in the language is indispensable for proper development of ability to speak it, and a year abroad in Greece is highly desirable for those with no previous contact with the language
- in courses in art and archaeology, ancient history, Late Antique studies and Byzantine studies direct contact with the material through, for example, study tours, museum visits, experience of field-work, and the opportunity to handle artefacts is highly desirable.

4.9 Some of the transferable skills specified under B11-16 may also be acquired or developed by extra-curricular enhancement activities, or through ancillary programmes made available by higher education providers to students generally.

Methods of assessment

Wide variety of assessment methods

4.10 Methods of assessment commonly found associated with programmes in the subject area similarly exhibit a wide variety. It is for higher education providers to decide on the appropriate form of evidence they require in order to assess the level of student achievement. Two principles, however, inform the assessment process:

- forms of evidence required relate primarily to the outcomes specified in section 3, and particularly to the study methods chosen as appropriate for the development of the attributes characteristic of an honours graduate in the subject area (paragraphs 4.7-4.9)
- programmes include elements of both formative and summative assessment.

Assessment of general cognitive attributes: general remarks

4.11 The focus of the principal forms of assessment employed in the subject area are ordinarily the knowledge of the subject-matter displayed by a student (A above). But since students will be unable to display knowledge without also displaying some or all of the skills and abilities listed under B4-10, they too can be directly or (as also, for example, in the case of research skills) indirectly assessed by the same forms of examination. It is common practice in the subject area for students to be subject to both formative and summative assessment of their abilities to write essays and perform exercises which will test linguistic or critical or problem-solving skills. Criteria of assessment is often couched explicitly in terms of

such skills and abilities. In Modern Greek oral assessment of the ability to speak and understand the language is also universally practised (A8). On the capacities and abilities tested by the preparation of joint projects, reports and dissertations and projects see below: these enable students to demonstrate a range of attributes, including autonomy, critical reflection and critical judgement (B1-3) in particular.

Assessment of practical abilities: general remarks

4.12 Many of the skills and abilities listed under B11-16, for example, presentational and IT skills, the ability to work effectively in collaboration with others, for example in class performance, may be subject to only formative assessment, but in some cases they may also be subjected to summative assessment. Proficiency in a modern foreign language (B16) may be certificated by providers on the basis of a separate assessment procedure, not related to the examination structures in place in the subject area. Evidence that an honours graduate in classics, ancient history, Byzantine studies or Modern Greek has acquired, for example, skills and abilities listed under B11-16, may also be supplied by such means as records of progress and achievement, and made available to potential employers through academic references where appropriate.

Specific forms of summative assessment

4.13 Summative assessment takes different forms, all focused in the first instance on students' knowledge of subject-matter (A1-3, 6-7) such as:

- in-course tests of language skills
- formal written 'unseen' examinations - well suited also to assessment of the skills and abilities listed under A4-5 and B4-10; require students to work and think under pressure (B14); particularly appropriate for the testing of linguistic skills (A6-7)
- open-book and take-away written examinations - these have most but not all of the same properties (they may not be appropriate for testing all linguistic skills (A6-7))
- assessment by coursework and by submission of extended essays, dissertations and projects - will require students to submit prepared work; tests also the ability to work under pressure and meet deadlines (B14), as well as the skills and abilities listed under A4-5 and B4-10; may enable students to make better display of a broad knowledge of subject matter (A2) than they are often capable of in unseen examinations
- oral examinations - particularly appropriate for testing knowledge of primary materials such as art objects (A3) and the ability to understand and converse in a spoken foreign language (A7).

4.14 In general, use of a variety of forms of summative assessment helps to exploit the strengths of each while counteracting the disadvantages to which each is prone.

5 Standards of attainment in classics and ancient history (including Byzantine studies and Modern Greek)

Attributes of honours graduates: standards of attainment

5.1 A statement representing general expectations about standards for the award of an honours degree in classics and ancient history might take various forms. As indicated in paragraph 1.3, this subject benchmark statement is couched in terms of the personal attributes of honours graduates, and more specifically in terms of threshold (minimal) and typical attainment. The abilities and forms of knowledge characteristic of honours graduates in the subject area have been identified in section 3. Graduates will have acquired most or a majority of these, but in different degrees and from different vantage points depending on differences in programmes of study and in individual pathways through them as well as on personal circumstances and capacities.

Assessment and standards of attainment

5.2 Standards are assured through the assessment procedures discussed in section 4. In order to graduate with honours, students are generally required to satisfy examiners that their performance across a range of pieces of work, presented for assessment on occasions separated by a period or periods of time, meets the required standard for award of the degree. The extent of their ability to demonstrate the graduate attributes listed in section 3 is therefore measured relative to that performance in most cases, although for some attributes (for example B11 and B13) summative assessment is often thought inappropriate, and others are commonly not assessed at all (for example B15 and B16). In such cases, other forms of reporting are sometimes employed. There are both quantitative and qualitative aspects to be taken into consideration: how many attributes students' exhibit and how often, how well they exhibit them, and how far they exhibit them singly or in some form of integration. Different considerations apply to tests of linguistic competence from those applicable to other kinds of work presented for assessment. Tests of linguistic competence necessarily concentrate on a particular subset of attributes, principally those listed as A1, A3, A4, A6 and A7, and B3, B5, B8 and B12. Other kinds of work presented give opportunities for demonstration of a wider range of attributes.

Threshold standard of attainment

5.3 Honours graduates of overall minimal attainment will have demonstrated some degree of proficiency in the majority of the attributes listed in section 3. To take some examples, evidence of proficiency will have been provided if a graduate has, to some degree, demonstrated an ability to:

- understand key features of another culture (A1)
- be familiar with the most important primary materials relevant to a topic (A3)
- demonstrate an awareness of more than one viewpoint or approach in discussing a topic (A5)
- assess her or his own progress and ask for help when needed (B2)
- focus on the essentials of an issue (B5)
- present largely expository material in written form (B9)
- perform assigned tasks within a group setting and to take part in group discussion (B13)
- exploit a range of basic IT resources effectively (B15).

5.4 Most of the attributes demonstrated by a graduate of overall minimal attainment will have been evidenced in several pieces of work presented for assessment. On some of these

occasions a number of them will have been demonstrated in an integrated way. For example, a written examination answer on the Peloponnesian War may, while expounding some historical material (B9), provide evidence also of ability to focus on the essentials of an issue (B5). At the same time it may show familiarity with Thucydides, the main primary source (A3), and exhibit an awareness of more than one view about the historical value of the speeches he attributes to leading politicians (A5).

Typical standard of attainment

5.5 Honours graduates of overall typical attainment will have demonstrated a clear competence in most of the attributes in section 3. Evidence of clear competence will have been provided with respect to examples paralleling those chosen in 5.3 if a graduate has demonstrated an ability to:

- understand a range of more and less familiar features of another culture (A1)
- be familiar with an appropriate and diverse range of primary materials relevant to a topic (A3)
- demonstrate an understanding of different viewpoints, and adopt different approaches in discussing a topic (A5)
- make an accurate assessment of his or her own progress, and identify and formulate issues on which help is needed (B2)
- extract key elements from complex information, and identify and solve associated problems (B5)
- marshal argument lucidly, coherently and concisely (B9)
- work in groups as an active participant who contributes effectively to the group's task (B13).

5.6 A graduate of overall typical attainment is likely also to have achieved a degree of proficiency in exploiting effectively a range of basic IT resources (B15).

5.7 Most of the attributes demonstrated by a graduate of overall typical attainment will have been evidenced on a majority of those occasions where there was opportunity to exhibit them. On most occasions where they have been exhibited, a number of them will have been demonstrated in an integrated way. Where the opportunity presents itself, as for example with projects, reports or dissertations or in some final year unseen examinations, there will have been clear evidence of autonomy (B1), critical reflection (B2) and critical judgement (B3).

Interpreting standards

5.8 The concepts 'some degree of proficiency' and 'a clear competence' which govern the formulations in 5.3 and 5.4 are clearly subject to interpretation. It is for higher education providers, external examiners and QAA reviewers to satisfy themselves that appropriate interpretations are being applied in assessment or reporting procedures within individual programmes. The notion of threshold or typical attainment is best regarded as a holistic concept: as attempting to articulate an expectation about the standard at which personal attributes as a whole have been exhibited. In order to measure such attainment disaggregation of attributes is useful and unavoidable. But the honours graduate is above all a person who can deploy his or her knowledge, abilities and skills in their entirety, displaying balance and judgement in a variety of circumstances.

Appendix a: Membership of the benchmarking and review groups for the subject benchmark statement for classics and ancient history (including Byzantine studies and Modern Greek)

Membership of the review group for the subject benchmark statement for classics and ancient history (including Byzantine studies and Modern Greek) (2014)

Dr Errietta Bissa	University of Wales Trinity Saint David
Peter D' Sena	Higher Education Academy
Dr Jonathan Eaton	Newcastle College
Dr Peter Liddel	The University of Manchester
Dr Genevieve Liveley	University of Bristol
Dr James Robson	The Open University
Professor Greg Woolf (Chair)	University of St Andrews

Professional, statutory and regulatory body representatives

Professor Roderick Beaton	Society for Modern Greek Studies
Dr Timothy Greenwood	Society for the Promotion of Byzantine Studies
Dr Kurt Lampe	The Bristol Institute of Greece, Rome and the Classical Tradition
Dr Josephine Crawley Quinn	Council of University Classical Departments

Employer representatives

Dr Anastasia Christophilopoulou	The Fitzwilliam Museum
Paul Roberts	The British Museum

Membership of the review group for the subject benchmark statement for classics and ancient history (including Byzantine studies and Modern Greek) (2007)

Details provided below are as published in the second edition of the subject benchmark statement.

Professor R Osborne (Chair)	University of Cambridge
Dr S Phillippo	University of Newcastle upon Tyne
Professor J Powell	Royal Holloway, University of London
Professor C Smith	University of St Andrews

Membership of the original benchmarking group for classics and ancient history (including Byzantine studies and Modern Greek) (2000)

Details provided below are as published in the original subject benchmark statement.

Professor D C Braund	University of Exeter
Professor C Carey	Royal Holloway and Bedford New College
K Dowden	University of Birmingham

Dr C Emlyn-Jones
Professor E Jeffreys
Professor A B Lloyd
Professor C A Martindale
Dr E A Moignard
Professor M E Mullett
Professor R G Osborne
J J Paterson
Dr T Rajak
C M Roueché
Professor M Schofield (Chair)
Professor R W Sharples
Dr P C de Souza
Dr C J Tuplin
Dr G M King (Secretary)

Open University
University of Oxford
University of Wales, Swansea
University of Bristol
University of Glasgow
Queen's University of Belfast
University of Oxford
University of Newcastle upon Tyne
University of Reading
King's College London
University of Cambridge
University College London
St Mary's College, Strawberry Hill
University of Liverpool
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