QAA

Subject Benchmark Statement

Linguistics

September 2015

UK Quality Code for Higher Education
Part A: Setting and maintaining academic standards

Contents

How can I use this document?

This document is a Subject Benchmark Statement for Linguistics. It 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 Linguistics or related subjects
- a prospective student thinking about studying Linguistics, 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 Linguistics.

Explanations of unfamiliar terms used in this Subject Benchmark Statement can be found in the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education's glossary.[1]

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[1] The QAA glossary is available at: www.qaa.ac.uk/Pages/GlossaryEN.aspx

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.[2] 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.[3]

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:[4]

- *Chapter B1: Programme Design, Development and Approval*
- *Chapter B3: Learning and Teaching*
- *Chapter B6: Assessment of Students and the Recognition 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.[5] 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.

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[2] The Quality Code, available at www.qaa.ac.uk/assuring-standards-and-quality/the-quality-code, aligns with the *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area*, available at: www.enqa.eu/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/ESG_endorsed-with-changed-foreword.pdf

[3] Part A: Setting and Maintaining Academic Standards, available at: www.qaa.ac.uk/assuring-standards-and-quality/the-quality-code/quality-code-part-a

[4] Individual Chapters are available at: www.qaa.ac.uk/assuring-standards-and-quality/the-quality-code/quality-part-b.

[5] See further Part A: Setting and Maintaining Academic Standards, available at: www.qaa.ac.uk/assuring-standards-and-quality/the-quality-code/quality-code-part-a.

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.[6]

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.

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[6] See further the *UK Quality Code for Higher Education: General Introduction*, available at: www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/information-and-guidance/publication?PubID=181.

About this Subject Benchmark Statement

This Subject Benchmark Statement refers to bachelor's degrees with honours in Linguistics.[7]

This version of the statement forms its third edition, following initial publication in 2002 and review and revision in 2007.[8]

Note on alignment with higher education sector coding systems

Programmes of study which use this Subject Benchmark Statement as a reference point are generally classified under the following codes in the Joint Academic Coding System (JACS): Q100 to Q190.[9]

Summary of changes from the previous Subject Benchmark Statement (2007)

The basic structure of the previous revision to the Statement has broadly been retained, but numerous changes in form, structure and substance have been made throughout. Many changes are stylistic, though some are prompted by developments in the discipline, including the emergence of new subfields of linguistics and the appearance of new technology. All changes are intended to make the document clearer, more balanced and more effective, especially for current and prospective students, and for employers.

Section 2 is now titled *The nature and extent of linguistics*, previously the title of section 3, while section 3 is titled *Subject knowledge and understanding,* which was previously merely a subtitle within this section. The major levels of linguistic analysis have been largely redefined, and the domains of linguistic study are now broadened to include areas not outlined in the previous document. A new subsection covering applications of linguistic analysis has been added. The titles of sections 4 (Skills), 5 (Teaching, learning and assessment) and 6 (Benchmark standards) remain the same, though the subtitles and organisation of sections have been altered in line with current QAA terminology and content organisation, and revisions to content have been made. Various definitions of areas of study and of terminology within linguistics have been revised throughout the document, reflecting current practice within the discipline.

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[7] Bachelor's degrees are at level 6 in *The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* and level 10 in *The Framework for Qualifications of Higher Education Institutions in Scotland*, as published in *The Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications of UK Degree-Awarding Bodies*, available at: www.qaa.ac.uk/assuring-standards-and-quality/the-quality-code/qualifications.

[8] Further information is available in the *Recognition Scheme for Subject Benchmark Statements,* available at: www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/information-and-guidance/publication?PubID=190.

[9] Further information about JACS is available at: www.hesa.ac.uk/content/view/1776/649/.

1   Introduction

1.1   This Statement concerns bachelor's degrees with honours in linguistics, including the following: single honours linguistics degrees; joint honours degrees where linguistics is combined with one or more other disciplines; combined honours degrees incorporating linguistics; and linguistics modules in other honours degrees. Employers and prospective students interested in the nature and content of linguistics as offered by higher education providers may find sections 3 and 4 most useful; academics preparing approval documentation will find the learning outcomes in sections 5 and 6 of particular relevance.

1.2   There is a great variety of provision of linguistics in higher education providers. The majority of degree programmes involving the discipline have linguistics in their title, but there are also degree programmes, and modules within degree programmes, whose focus is linguistic but whose title makes no explicit reference to linguistics; some programmes employ the more general term 'language'. Linguistics is also widely studied at postgraduate level. In many providers, linguistics is offered in a separate department or division of linguistics; some have departments providing linguistics together with English or modern languages; and in others there are groups that teach linguistics within a larger department, school or faculty. This variety of provision reflects the essentially interdisciplinary nature of much linguistic study, and is reflected in the academic affiliations of the members of the original Subject Benchmark Statement and review groups.

1.3   Higher education providers will draw on this Statement differently depending on whether they offer a single honours degree in linguistics, a joint honours degree or some other pattern of study. Linguistics programmes may also focus on particular research strengths within an institution. Providers offering joint and combined honours degrees will also wish to draw on other appropriate Subject Benchmark Statements, including those for Languages and related studies, English, Philosophy, Psychology, Speech and Language Therapy, and Media, Film and Cultural Studies.[10] Other Statements may also be relevant.

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[10] A statement for English Language was also created by the then Higher Education Academy, English Subject Centre, (2011) (which does not form part of the Quality Code) available at: www.english.heacademy.ac.uk/explore/resources/language/docs/EL_benchmarking_final.pdf. QAA now has received an expression of interest for a QAA Subject Benchmark Statement in English Language. Further details are available on QAA's website.

2 The nature and extent of linguistics

2.1 Linguistics is concerned with the knowledge, structure and use of language. The discipline involves the study of the human capacity for language in all its expressions (spoken, signed and written). Because language appears to be a uniquely human attribute, questions of what we know when we know a language, how we acquire linguistic knowledge and how we use it in language production and comprehension have been pursued for over 2,000 years, raising fundamental questions about human cognition and behaviour. Perhaps the key insight of linguistics is that language and linguistic behaviour are highly structured. 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 modern linguistics is that the nature of linguistic behaviour can be elucidated by systematic study, using a range of theoretical and empirical methodologies, including the development of theoretical models that can be systematically tested against empirical data. Some researchers focus primarily on the structural aspects of the language capacity and linguistic behaviour, while others investigate the extent to which extra-linguistic and contextual information might play a role in determining linguistic knowledge. There are strong links between linguistic research and psychology and cognitive science. Many open questions remain. Chief among these is perhaps the question of to what extent the human capacity for language is rooted in a domain-specific cognitive system and to what extent it emerges from more general cognitive principles and mechanisms.

2.2 Linguistic research in the twenty-first century encompasses all aspects of the systematic study of the human capacity for language. Such aspects range from the physical properties of the sound waves in utterances, through to the intentions of speakers towards others in conversations, and the social contexts in which linguistic interactions are embedded. Sub-branches of linguistics focus on each aspect of language, including how language is acquired and used, and how language changes. Linguists also study what languages have in common, and the extent of and limits to the variation within and between languages. The study of the properties of languages in this sense, and the construction of theoretical models for these areas of inquiry, all come under the auspices of linguistics.

2.3 Since the use and knowledge of language involves a wide range of cognitive, social and interactional skills and competences, the intellectual tools required to study the language capacity also stem from a wide range of disciplines. Therefore much of linguistics is interdisciplinary, both in terms of the questions addressed and the methodology brought to bear on them. Complementary disciplines often draw on formal logic, psychology, philosophy, sociology, anthropology, and neuroscience.

2.4 Language enters into almost every area of human activity, and therefore the scope of linguistic inquiry can be extremely broad. Applications of linguistic research occur in almost any area where language is a practical concern. A sample of these areas might include, but is by no means restricted to:

- language and speech processing in information technology
- the development of writing systems, dictionaries, and standardised technical formats for languages
- lexicology, which is concerned with the nature of vocabulary and the structure of the lexicon; lexicography applies the insights of lexicology, as well as those of other linguistic disciplines, to the study of dictionaries and lexicons
- translation between languages
- language planning and language policy, including the maintenance, documentation and revitalisation of endangered languages

- the study of second language acquisition, including bilingualism and multilingualism, and the linguistic and social factors affecting processes and outcomes in the learning of additional languages
- the teaching of English as a second or foreign language
- the study of linguistic impairments, including aphasia or speech disorders and autistic spectrum disorders, and therapeutic intervention in such disorders
- the analysis of under-documented languages and their roles in indigenous cultures and ways of life
- the study of communication between groups of people with different sociological, cultural and ethnic backgrounds, and from different geographical environments
- language awareness and language ideology
- the development of computational techniques for analysing large databases of spoken, signed or written language (corpora) and for handling database query systems
- forensic analysis of speech and text, the interpretation of linguistic evidence, and other aspects of language and the law.

2.5   It should be noted that applied linguistics is often regarded as a separate but related discipline; it uses insights from linguistics, education, sociology and psychology to study questions and problems involving language and, in partnership with those involved, to seek practical solutions for them. Areas addressed include language learning and teaching, the role of language in education, and communication in professional and public service contexts, as well as issues of language, power, and social (in)justice. Degree programmes in linguistics differ in the emphasis placed on topics of this nature, with some programmes devoting a substantial amount of time to areas within applied linguistics, while other programmes will cover little from this field.

2.6   Single honours degree programmes in linguistics cover a substantial part of the provision described in section 3. Joint and combined honours programmes, in general, select or modify various aspects of this provision, taking into account the provider's specific teaching and research strengths, and also the needs of its students. All relevant honours programmes have at least a basic introductory module that introduces students to the wide range of issues in linguistics.

3   Subject knowledge and understanding

3.1   As outlined in section 2, language is studied from a wide range of perspectives. Traditionally, the discipline of linguistics is divided into various subfields of inquiry, reflecting distinct levels of linguistic analysis. The subfields include phonetics, phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, pragmatics and the analysis of discourse, though in practice the boundaries between these areas are highly permeable. Graduates with a bachelor's degree in linguistics will be expected to have an understanding of the basic concepts, modes of analysis, methodologies and theoretical approaches in more than one of these traditional areas of study. In addition, linguistics graduates are expected to have significant knowledge and comprehension of one or more broader areas of linguistic inquiry: such areas may include language acquisition; language variation and change; the role of language in society; and the nature of language as a cognitive object. Programmes are expected to vary in how they develop the balance between the various aspects of linguistic study. Some programmes will focus mainly on the levels of analysis and the interactions between them, while others will treat the levels of analysis as tools which facilitate understanding of a sociolinguistic, psycholinguistic, biological, anthropological, philosophical, educational or computational perspective on language. Joint and combined honours programmes select topics appropriate for the particular focus of their degrees.

3.2   A linguistics graduate is expected to have knowledge of a range of empirical linguistic phenomena and of the relevant technical terminology and methodology used in the description and analysis of such phenomena. Any or all of the basic levels of analysis studied in theoretical or descriptive linguistics may be drawn on, as well as some wider areas of linguistic inquiry. Knowledge gained may be largely descriptive but is usually informed by an appropriate theoretical framework. Linguistic studies may involve the systematic investigation of the structure and use of a single language or language family, but ideally a programme in linguistics would include data from a range of languages, in order to develop a deeper understanding of the nature and use of language more generally.

Levels of linguistic analysis

3.3   **Phonetics** is the study of the physical properties of speech sounds and of the articulatory and psychological mechanisms used in speech production and perception. Phoneticians are also concerned with the recognition, transcription and production of the sounds of the world's languages; and with identifying information in the speech signal beyond what is determined by language, such as cues to the identity and characteristics of the speaker. Phonetic theory, in conjunction with phonology, deals with the mapping between the language-specific cognitive representation of speech sounds and the organs used to produce and perceive these sounds. A student specialising in phonetics would be expected to display an understanding of one or more theories in each branch of phonetics studied; and to command a range of techniques for recording and observing speech, including phonetic transcription and instrumental displays, as well as displaying understanding of experimental design and data analysis.

3.4   **Phonology** is the study of the systematic organisation of speech sounds in language. This includes the study of the cross-linguistic properties of sound systems, and the study of the sound systems of particular languages. Phonology involves both the description and analysis of the sound patterns occurring in the world's languages, and investigation into the relationship between speech sounds themselves and the abstract phonological system underlying them. In addition to having a command of the basic categories and concepts used in the description and analysis of sound patterns, a student specialising in phonology would be expected to display a critical understanding of one or more theoretical approaches to the analysis of sound systems, and to be able to assess the predictive power of such theories.

3.5   **Morphology** is the study of the internal structure of words and of word-formation, and of the properties of the minimal units that bear independent meaning or grammatical function, known as morphemes. Morphologists investigate how these minimal units are constituted and how they interrelate, addressing such questions as what kind of lexical information these minimal units specify, and how these specifications relate to the morphological patterns and word-formation processes occurring across languages. In addition to having a command of the basic categories and concepts used in morphological analysis, a student specialising in morphology would be expected to display a critical understanding of one or more theoretical approaches to morphology, and a comprehension of the interaction between morphology and at least one other level of analysis, such as syntax, phonology or semantics.

3.6   **Syntax** is the study of how words are combined to form phrases and sentences, and of the relationships occurring between the subparts of phrases and sentences. Syntacticians investigate systematic patterns of phrase and sentence construction, looking both at the specific systems and constructions found in individual languages and at the nature and extent of syntactic variation displayed among the languages of the world. Syntactic theory is engaged in understanding the theoretical basis for these descriptive findings, through the development of formal models. Additionally, syntacticians are concerned with the relationship between syntax and other levels of analysis, including phonology, morphology, lexical and phrasal semantics, pragmatics and discourse. As well as having a command of the basic categories and concepts used in syntactic analysis, a student specialising in syntax would be expected to display a critical understanding of one or more theoretical approaches to syntax, and to be able to assess the predictive power of such theories.

3.7   **Semantics** is the study of meaning at all levels: the meaning of morphemes and words, phrases, grammatical constructions, sentences and larger units. While lexical semantics studies the meaning of words, focusing mainly on their content, grammatical semantics studies aspects of meaning having direct relevance to syntax, including how the meaning of phrases and sentences can be computed from the meaning of the elements they contain and the way these elements are syntactically combined. Relations between natural language and formal logical systems are studied as part of logical semantics, often using techniques from formal logic. A student specialising in semantics would, in addition to having a command of the basic concepts of semantic analysis, display a critical understanding of one or more semantic theories, and would be able to assess the predictive capability of such theories.

3.8   **Pragmatics** is the study of the way people use linguistic resources, in particular situational or discourse contexts. Within pragmatics, the primary focus involves the study of language in relation to the context in which it is produced, and also the ways in which speakers use their language in everyday interactions. Pragmatics is therefore concerned with how language is used to enable a speaker to relate to, understand and possibly influence other people. A student specialising in pragmatics would, in addition to having a command of the basic concepts within the subfield, display a critical understanding of one or more theories of pragmatics.

3.9   **Discourse analysis** is concerned with the ways in which naturally-occurring language is organised in use, and this subfield thus integrates the description of linguistic form with the purposes or functions that linguistic forms are designed to serve. The notion of purpose or function is conceptualised at various levels, from the purely textual to the macro social level. Analysts address a wide range of questions, including the semantic relationships between sentences and their syntactic realisations; the structure of information within sentences and across texts; the strategies used in the production and understanding of discourse; how the structure of social interaction is manifested in conversation; and issues

of language, power and social (in)justice. A student specialising in one of these areas would, in addition to having a command of the basic concepts within the subfield, display a critical understanding of one or more theories of discourse.

Domains of linguistic study

3.10 Each of the levels of linguistic analysis above also constitutes a subfield of linguistics in its own right. This section presents summaries of the major broader subareas within the discipline, which generally employ data and theoretical insights from more than one level of linguistic analysis.

3.11 **Sociolinguistics** addresses the relationship between language and society. Micro sociolinguistics is the study of variation in the language of individual speakers and groups of speakers, and investigates the conscious or subconscious intentions of speakers in selecting particular speech styles and forms. Features as diverse as gender and sexual orientation, age, social status, topic of conversation and identity of interlocutor can also correlate with particular linguistic variants. Variation may involve language mixing and multilingualism, and may also lead to borrowing between languages used in a single community. Linguistic variation can be studied at any of the levels of analysis. It can also be studied in relation to cognate disciplines, including psychology and sociology, and in relation to discourse analysis. While micro sociolinguistics focuses on language variation at the level of the individual in society, macro sociolinguistics begins with society, and so addresses issues such as language policy and planning, language maintenance and language shift. Specialists in this area may also study language endangerment and/or death; and the development of pidgin and creole languages. Sociolinguistics intersects with the study of regional dialects, the ethnography of language, and anthropological linguistics.

3.12 **Historical linguistics** involves the study of language change over time, investigating data from relatively recent historical periods of language usage, including inferred data that can reasonably be reconstructed from known forms. It includes the genealogical classification of languages into family groups and the reconstruction of hypothetical ancestors for those groups. The study of language change may focus on any level of linguistic analysis. Specialists in historical linguistics also aim to identify the motivations for language change in terms of, for instance, the phonetic characteristics of linguistic forms; language acquisition by children or by second language learners; and social, cultural and political factors. An important area of study involves the interaction of change with language variation and the extent to which both can be integrated with, and informed by, current linguistic theories.

3.13 The field of language evolution or **evolutionary linguistics** focuses on the biological origins and evolution of the language capacity itself. Since neither language nor the relevant brain structures associated with language fossilise, evidence for the emergence of the language capacity must necessarily be indirect, but generally involves the methodology of reverse engineering. Evolutionary linguists examine evidence that includes language acquisition and language emergence, particularly the emergence of new sign languages, as well as pidgins and creoles; archaeological and palaeontological evidence for advanced cognition and physical traits relevant to speech and language; anthropology; population genetics; comparative studies of communication and cognition in closely-related primate species; convergent evolution of learned forms of communication, for instance in birdsong; and the computational, robotic and experimental modelling of the biological evolution of language.

3.14 **Typological linguistics** encompasses several closely-related areas of investigation. Typology involves the classification of languages in terms of common structural features and the implicational relations among those features. Areal linguistics is

concerned with similarities and differences between languages in a particular geographical area. Comparative linguistics involves comparisons between two or more individual languages or language families, which may or may not be historically related. Broadly, the field of typological linguistics is concerned both with the unity of linguistic structures across different languages and language families, and also with the extent and nature of the diversity of structures displayed by the world's languages.

3.15   **Psycholinguistics** studies the mental mechanisms involved in the application of linguistic knowledge to phenomena involving language use. These include the production and comprehension of spoken, signed and written language, as well as the acquisition of linguistic knowledge in both children and adult learners. In comprehension, psycholinguists study such areas as word recognition; the processing of syntactic structure; and the processes that yield semantic and pragmatic interpretation of utterances. Research often relies on data gathered through a range of experimental techniques designed to uncover linguistic behaviour. The study of language production aims to elucidate what is involved in the planning and execution of utterances, from intention to articulation. It uses evidence from experiments, as well as from large collections/bodies of spoken and written texts (corpora), and from language and communication breakdown.

3.16   **Neurolinguistics** studies the neurological implementation of the mental mechanisms involved in language use, both perception and production. Early work in neurolinguistics was based on findings from aphasiology, the study of linguistic deficits resulting from brain damage. More recently, the development of brain imaging techniques (such as PET and fMRI) and time-sensitive electrophysiological techniques (such as EEG and MEG) has made it possible to study healthy brains involved in a variety of linguistic tasks. Work in neurolinguistics is informed by neuroscience and neurobiology, on the one hand, and by disciplines concerned with cognition, such as psycholinguistics and theoretical linguistics, on the other. Neurolinguists may contribute to the evaluation of (psycho)linguistic models by comparing the match between such models and observed neurological activation during the processing of linguistic information.

3.17   In studying **language acquisition**, linguists are concerned with how language(s) develop in children and adults. Core issues in the study of first language acquisition include the question of what constitutes knowledge of language and how it is acquired by children; which aspects of language behaviour are innate or learnt; and language socialisation in childhood. Second language acquisition is the study of the acquisition of a language after the first language is established. Additionally, some research focuses on a comparison between first and second language acquisition, which may shed light on the nature/nurture debate; a link with pedagogical issues is also often made. The study of bilingualism/multilingualism centres on the mental organisation of two or more language systems in an individual and its implications for theories of how language is mentally represented. It also investigates the social and psychological forces underlying the development and use of two or more languages, including the question of how the languages might influence one another and the circumstances under which speakers might combine their languages in conversation.

3.18   The study of the **history of linguistics** investigates developments in linguistics and their historical and cultural contexts. The history of linguistics thus plays an important role in understanding how research in linguistics has contributed to the general history of ideas as seen in their own time. Some key areas within this subfield include the investigation of various grammatical traditions; the development of the Universal Grammar concept; phonetics; the development of the comparative method of analysis; the development of philosophical and psychological approaches to analysing language; the structuralist tradition; and typological studies, among many other areas.

3.19   **Philosophy of language** broadly considers the philosophical questions raised by language, such as: What is meaning? What is knowledge of language? How is language usable? How does language connect to the world? How does language connect to society and culture? In the UK, philosophy of language is usually pursued from the perspective of analytic philosophy, following from the work of Frege, Russell, Wittgenstein, Quine, Grice, Davidson and Chomsky, but different perspectives (pragmatist, continental) can also be brought to bear on these questions. In addition, philosophy of language also looks at a range of more specific issues in the philosophical analysis of language, including reference, truth, names, beliefs, metaphor, time, context and quantification.

Applications of linguistic analysis

3.20   Applications of linguistic analysis include, but are not limited to, the following subfields.

3.21   **Clinical linguistics** is the application of linguistic theories and analytical techniques in the field of speech, language and communication impairment. It can be used in the description, explanation and remediation of a wide range of impairments in children and adults. All areas of linguistics can be applied clinically to study disorders in the perception, production and representation of language in all its modalities (spoken, signed and written). Clinical linguistics thus also focuses on characterising the language use of atypical populations, for example, speakers with autism, dementia, aphasia and so on.
By investigating the ways in which communication may be impaired, clinical linguistics also provides insights into the nature of unimpaired language, its development and use.

3.22   **Computational linguistics**/natural language processing covers a wide area concerned with computer processing of human language, often for practical purposes such as human/machine interaction, but is also used as a methodology for testing implementations of linguistic analysis (for example, computer simulations of language and speech). Language corpora (section 2.4), particularly annotated corpora, are often central to the construction of such systems. The field includes such areas as natural language understanding and generation; information extraction and retrieval; dialogue modelling; speech recognition and synthesis; and the computational manipulation of corpus data.
A specialist in computational linguistics would be expected to have an understanding of one or more areas of linguistic analysis and an ability to use/develop computational tools to deal with these using an appropriate programming language.

3.23   **Forensic linguistics** involves the use of linguistic analysis in the legal domain and, more generally, addresses the relationship between language and the law. Forensic analysis involves the detection and measurement of distinguishing features in sample texts or audio recordings, as part of criminal cases requiring speaker/author identification, the authentication of disputed confessions, plagiarism detection and so on. In civil cases, forensic linguistics can provide evidence bearing on trademark or copyright infringement, defamation, or liability involving product labelling, for example. Linguistic analysis is also used to identify and address inequalities in the application of the law pertaining to language and language-related practices.

3.24   **Translation** and interpreting are fields which require a systematic understanding of the patterns of structure and usage of different languages, in spoken, signed and written modalities. Translation theory draws on insights from various branches of linguistics, such as lexical semantics, text linguistics, pragmatics and discourse analysis, as well as contrastive analyses of language systems and cultural practices in different speech communities. In a globalised, multilingual world, these insights are increasingly applied in contexts which overlap with related fields such as forensic and clinical linguistics.

3.25   **Lexicography** is the application of the linguistic analysis of words to the design, compilation, and use of dictionaries and lexical databases. The field employs insights from many subfields of the discipline, notably morphology, sociolinguistics, historical linguistics, and semantics. It also draws heavily on computational linguistics and typically involves the use of large corpora (see section 2.4), both monolingual and multilingual. Given that dictionaries play a significant role in language learning and teaching, and in translation and interpreting, there is considerable convergence of interests between these areas.

4 Skills

4.1   As indicated, linguistics interacts with many other disciplines. Different subsets of the topics described in section 3 will appear in different linguistics programmes.
A programme leading to a single honours degree in linguistics will cover a substantial proportion of these topics. Joint and combined honours degrees will draw on an appropriate subset of these topics. In addition, holders of a bachelor's degree with honours in linguistics will have acquired a range of subject-specific skills. The following are especially relevant:

- knowledge of the fundamental analytical concepts and methods of inquiry appropriate to the topics outlined in section 3
- the ability to take a systematic approach to the identification, description and analysis of language phenomena
- the ability to ask theoretically and empirically motivated questions about language structure and use
- the ability to apply the basic techniques for collecting/eliciting and transcribing data specific to the various sub-disciplines of linguistics, including the use of language corpora, elicitation tasks, introspection, laboratory experiments, questionnaires, interviews and other types of linguistic fieldwork
- an understanding of the practicalities of organising and carrying out fieldwork, and of the ethical and legal issues involved in the collection and use of data from speakers of a language (language consultants)
- the ability to apply analytical concepts specific to different levels of linguistic analysis to appropriate data sets
- an understanding of the basic techniques of data analysis relevant to the different sub-disciplines of linguistics; these may include the use of statistics, corpus-analytic techniques, instrumental phonetic analysis, qualitative analysis and reporting, and quantitative approaches to linguistic analysis, including data visualisation and statistical analysis
- the ability to formulate linguistic generalisations and to construct and test hypotheses within the scope of linguistics, using appropriate evidence
- the ability to critically 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
- the ability to critically evaluate alternative theories, drawing on an understanding of the nature of linguistic theory and of what constitutes an explanation within the scope of linguistics
- the ability to present linguistic data and analysis using the appropriate formalisms and conventions specific to each sub-discipline of linguistics, including bracketing, tree diagrams, formal logic, graphs, tables, matrices and specific transcription systems.
- the ability to apply an understanding of how language works to principles of learning and teaching language, especially English as a second or foreign language.

4.2   Degrees in linguistics offer students the opportunity to develop many generic intellectual skills of value to employers. The following abilities are of particular significance:

- hypothesis formulation and testing
- experimental design; the design of research projects
- critically 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

- constructing and developing coherent lines of argumentation within a scientific discipline
- acquiring and organising complex information taken from a variety of sources
- recognising problems and developing problem-solving strategies, and evaluating their effectiveness
- using a variety of methodologies, and assessing the advantages and disadvantages of each
- communicating both in writing and in oral presentation in a well structured, fluent, concise and precise manner
- constructing substantial pieces of prose such as essays and research reports, using the appropriate register and style and with proper referencing, and exhibiting advanced literacy and, where appropriate, numeracy
- using the necessary computational tools and software packages wherever appropriate for the analysis of data
- understanding of and compliance with the ethical and legal issues involved in data collection and data storage
- working independently; demonstrating initiative and self-motivation; having effective organisational skills and time management
- working with others to negotiate and achieve common goals, and engaging with stakeholders in a constructive and respectful manner
- being intellectually prepared for effective learning of unfamiliar materials
- organising conferences and seminars
- developing presentation skills using current technology, including website design.

5   Teaching, learning and assessment

General

5.1   In all programmes 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 programme of study. There are explicit links between teaching and learning methods and the specific aims, emphases and learning outcomes of the degree programme. Teaching and learning methods are appropriate for the students' stage of progression.

5.2   Students are provided at the outset with full documentation on their programme of study, informing them of its aims and emphases. Linguistics programmes offer a wide variety of learning styles and activities, balancing the transmission of information with opportunities for the active manipulation and application of theory and data analysis by students.

5.3   A linguistics programme includes assessment of the student's capacity to analyse linguistic data and to apply techniques for gathering such data, as well as assessment of the student's understanding of linguistic concepts, theories, methods, and the relationships these bear to the concerns of related disciplines. Accordingly, the design of methods of assessment is sensitive to these goals. Linguistics programmes are typically innovative in the design of assessment, and this Statement does not seek to prescribe particular methods, recognising that advances in pedagogical understanding and technological innovations will offer new opportunities to assess students' capacities and understanding.

Teaching and Learning

5.4   Owing to the scientific and interdisciplinary nature of linguistics, a wide variety of teaching and learning methods can be expected. These include:

- lectures
- seminars
- practical classes and laboratory work
- critical reading of core texts
- workshops
- oral presentations, including those using visual presentation software
- group and individual tutorials
- 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
- external placements
- supervised independent learning
- using relevant computer software
- using virtual learning environments.

Assessment

5.5   Since assessment influences what students learn, degree programmes contain explicit links between assessment strategies and the specific aims and learning outcomes of the programme. Assessments are appropriate for the learning needs and stage of progression of the students; assessment formats are appropriate for the topic. Accordingly, methods of assessment may be drawn from the following, and include both formative and summative assessment:

- essays and other written work, including dissertations
- individual and group project reports
- seen and unseen examinations, which may involve written, aural and oral assessment
- individual and group presentations
- short exercises and cumulative problem sets involving data analysis
- qualitative or quantitative data collection and analysis
- portfolios of work
- laboratory-based practical work
- creation of online resources including websites and wikis
- critical self and peer-evaluation
- tasks aimed at the assessment of specific skills (for example transcription and information technology (IT) skills).

5.6 Assessment is not only evaluative; it is also formative and diagnostic. Consequently, students should be provided with constructive feedback. The rationale for assessment on programmes should be clearly presented to students and there should be precise, explicit assessment criteria for all forms of assessment.

6 Benchmark standards

6.1   This section is specifically aimed at those developing programmes in linguistics in higher education, and will be particularly relevant to academics preparing documentation for programme approval or re-approval.

6.2   Standards are expressed in terms of learning outcomes; that is the knowledge and skills acquired by students who have followed a programme of study leading to a bachelor's degree with honours in linguistics. Programmes in linguistics aim to impart a minimum set of skills and knowledge to all participating students. These attributes are described below as the 'threshold' standard. However, the goal of such programmes is to produce graduates with the attributes described below as the 'typical' level of attainment. The best students on linguistics programmes usually acquire a set of attributes which exceeds in range and/or depth those described as typical.

6.3   This Statement does not lay down a rigid curriculum but presents the set of topics from which a choice is made by individual degree programmes involving linguistics. Likewise the benchmark standards below do not define specific combinations of attributes as obligatory for particular types of degree programme. Furthermore, the benchmark standards are not to be interpreted as requiring each attribute to be assessed separately from the others or, indeed, to be assessed at all. For example, generic and intellectual skills are manifested in pieces of work whose primary purpose is the assessment of discipline-specific knowledge, understanding and skills.

6.4   Which specific attributes are to be acquired by graduates will be determined by individual degree programmes. Graduates who have followed programmes of study combining linguistics as a minor or major topic with other subjects are not expected to possess the same range and depth of attributes as graduates with a single honours degree in linguistics. Such students do have knowledge, understanding and discipline-specific skills relating to at least two disciplines, and they should acquire the same generic and intellectual skills from all the subjects in their degree programme.

6.5   Even students taking a single honours degree in linguistics are not expected to acquire all the knowledge, understanding and discipline-specific skills mentioned in the following paragraphs. They are expected to acquire a majority of them, but to different extents and depths depending on particular programmes of study, on different choices within particular programmes, and on differences in personal capacities.

6.6   On completion of a bachelor's degree with honours in linguistics, students should possess knowledge, understanding and skills in subsets of the areas of linguistic analysis listed in section 3. Subject to differences in programme, choice of programme and personal capacities, students should possess the following attributes:

Threshold standard

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

Intellectual skills

6.8 On graduating with an honours degree in linguistics, students will be able to:

i demonstrate a basic knowledge and understanding of the key linguistic areas outlined in section 3
ii specify and illustrate the core analytical concepts relevant to each level of linguistic analysis
iii describe the central components of any one formal model in one or more levels of analysis
iv demonstrate an understanding of the nature of a theory and of what constitutes an explanation
v demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between data and theory, in particular the central role of hypotheses and the testing of hypotheses
vi demonstrate an understanding of empirical and theoretical issues and problems and the type of data that is relevant to their solution
vii understand how to evaluate alternative analyses of a given data set
viii follow and construct coherent lines of argumentation within the scope of a scientific discipline
ix cite evidence appropriately.

Discipline-specific skills

6.9 On graduating with an honours degree in linguistics, students will be able to:

i describe and use under supervision the relevant basic techniques for collecting and analysing data, and identify the technical issues involved in the collection of reliable data
ii recognise the ethical and legal considerations involved in the collection of data from informants in the field or from participants in the experimental laboratory
iii under supervision, apply methods of data collection and manipulation appropriate to the analytical aims of the task. Such techniques may include:
  • eliciting data and measuring grammaticality/acceptability judgements
  • recording word-lists, read passages and conversation
  • collecting data by the participant-observer method
  • investigating articulatory and acoustic phenomena using laboratory techniques
  • designing and administering laboratory experiments for the investigation of language processing
  • organising and exploiting electronic databases using the procedures of corpus linguistics
  • describing and analysing linguistic data of all varieties, from any level of linguistic analysis
iv demonstrate an understanding of the issues involved in the basic techniques of data analysis, which may include:
  • the description and analysis of linguistic data of all varieties, from any level of linguistic analysis.
  • distributional criteria
  • the use of IT tools for the investigation of electronic databases
  • the use of computer packages for the analysis of speech acoustics
  • the use of laboratory techniques for the investigation of articulatory phenomena

- the choice of appropriate statistical tests
- the use of video and audio material in the analysis of spoken interaction

v   demonstrate understanding of data and analyses presented by means of graphs, tree diagrams, tables, matrices and other diagrams, and be able to use these appropriately, under supervision.

Generic skills

6.10   On graduating with an honours degree in linguistics, students will be able to:

i   formulate hypotheses and apply appropriate procedures to test them, under supervision

ii   plan, design and execute under supervision a piece of research or an inquiry, either as a member of a group or independently

iii   communicate ideas clearly, in writing or in oral presentations

iv   search out and synthesise information occurring in a variety of formats, giving appropriate acknowledgments and lists of sources

v   give an oral presentation based on information collected from various sources

vi   use current IT skills to produce well organised electronic documents, with some supervision

vii   interpret information presented in the form of diagrams, tables and graphs

viii   undertake competent self-directed study and learning.

Typical level of attainment

6.11   A typical level of performance is the standard expected by the majority of honours graduates.

Intellectual skills

6.12   On graduating with an honours degree in linguistics, students will be able to:

i   demonstrate a significant knowledge and understanding of the key linguistic areas outlined in section 3

ii   specify, illustrate and apply appropriately to new data the core analytical concepts relevant to each level of linguistic analysis

iii   describe, apply and evaluate the central components of any one formal model in one or more levels of analysis

iv   demonstrate both an appreciation of the nature of theory and of what constitutes an explanation, and also an understanding of the criteria for evaluating alternative theories and explanations

v   demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between data and theory, in particular the central role of hypotheses and the testing of hypotheses, and employ this knowledge in the analysis of data

vi   demonstrate an understanding of empirical and theoretical issues and problems, and determine and collect the type of data relevant to their solution

vii   demonstrate an understanding of alternative analyses of a given data set and be able to develop informed evaluations of the alternative analyses

viii   follow and construct coherent lines of argumentation within the scope of a scientific discipline, and recognise flaws in arguments presented by others

ix   cite evidence appropriately; find and use relevant data for the solution of analytical problems.

Discipline-specific skills

6.13   On graduating with an honours degree in linguistics, students will be able to:

i   describe, evaluate and apply correctly the relevant basic techniques for collecting and analysing data, and identify the technical issues involved in the collection of reliable data, with minimum supervision

ii   recognise and evaluate the ethical and legal considerations involved in the collection of data from informants in the field or from subjects in the experimental laboratory

iii   apply methods of data collection and manipulation appropriate to the analytical aims of the task with minimum guidance, and evaluate the results. Such techniques may include:
- eliciting data and measuring grammaticality/acceptability judgements
- recording word-lists, read passages and conversation
- collecting data by the participant-observer method
- investigating articulatory and acoustic phenomena by laboratory techniques
- designing and administering laboratory experiments for the investigation of language processing
- organising and exploiting electronic databases using the procedures of corpus linguistics
- describing and analysing linguistic data of all varieties, from any level of linguistic analysis.

iv   demonstrate an understanding of the issues involved in the basic techniques of data analysis, and evaluate and choose appropriate procedures for the analysis of different kinds of data. Such procedures may include:
- distributional criteria
- the use of IT tools for the investigation of electronic databases
- the use of computer packages for the analysis of speech acoustics
- the use of laboratory techniques for the investigation of articulatory phenomena
- the choice of appropriate statistical tests
- the use of video and audio material in the analysis of spoken interaction

v   demonstrate understanding of data and analyses presented by means of graphs, tree diagrams, tables, matrices and other diagrams and present data appropriately by these means with minimum supervision.

Generic skills

6.14   On graduating with an honours degree in linguistics, students will be able to:

i   formulate hypotheses and develop and apply appropriate procedures to test them, under minimum supervision

ii   plan, design and execute under minimum supervision a piece of research or an inquiry, either as a member of a group or independently

iii   engage in scholarly debate, and effectively communicate ideas in writing or in oral presentations to a professional standard

iv   search out information stored in a variety of formats, and produce a succinct, coherent and persuasive synthesis with appropriate acknowledgments and lists of sources

v   give a focused, directed and clear oral presentation based on information collected from various sources

vi   use current IT skills to produce well organised electronic documents with minimum supervision

vii   work independently to interpret, evaluate and exploit information presented in the form of diagrams, tables and graphs, and write competent reports on the information

viii   undertake successful self-directed study and learning.

Appendix: Membership of the benchmarking and review groups for the Subject Benchmark Statement for Linguistics

Membership of the review group for the Subject Benchmark Statement for Linguistics (2014)

Dr Peter Ackema	University of Edinburgh
Professor David Adger	Queen Mary University London
Dr Laura Bailey	University of Kent
Dr Andrew Caink	University of Westminster
Professor Christopher Hall	York St John University
Professor Ad Neeleman	Linguistics Association of Great Britain
Dr Diane Nelson	University of Leeds
Professor Francis Nolan	University of Cambridge
Dr Catrin Rhys	University of Ulster
Professor Maggie Tallerman (Chair)	Newcastle University
Dr Jelena Timotijevic	University of Brighton

Employer representative

Paul Stevens	Palgrave UK

Student reader

Catherine Jenkins	University of Oxford

QAA officer

Dr Neil Casey	Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education

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).

Dr David Adger	University of York
Dr Keith Brown (Chair)	University of Cambridge
Dr Billy Clark	Middlesex University
Dr Sara Howard	University of Sheffield
Professor April McMahon	University of Sheffield
Professor Jim Miller	University of Edinburgh
Professor Rosamond Mitchell	University of Southampton
Dr Florence Myles	University of Southampton
Dr Linda Shockey	University of Reading
Dr Mary Talbot	University of Sunderland
Professor Mark Tatham	University of Essex
Dr Jeanine Treffers-Daller	University of the West of England, Bristol