

A curved banner at the top of the page displays a collage of digital screens and icons. The screens show various content such as 'NEWS', 'INTERNET', 'TECHNOLOGY', 'BUSINESS', and 'Social Network'. Icons include a padlock, a checkmark, a globe, and a network diagram. The overall theme is digital communication and technology.

Subject Benchmark Statement: Communication, Media, Film and Cultural Studies

The Basics

This summary is designed to provide a short and accessible overview of the Subject Benchmark Statement for Communication, Media, Film and Cultural Studies for students, employers and academics. It is not intended to replace or alter the Statement, which should be referred to in the design and approval of courses and when any further detail is required.

Subject Benchmark Statements describe the nature of study and the benchmark academic standards expected of graduates in specific subject areas, and in respect of particular qualifications. They provide a picture of what graduates in a particular subject might reasonably be expected to know, do and understand at the end of their course or programme.

Subject Benchmark Statements are presented in four sections. Section 1 outlines the contextual information - providing the operational landscape, and boundaries, of subject discipline. This includes consideration of the ways in which the discipline addresses wider social goals, specifically in relation to: equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI); the requirements of disabled students; education for sustainable development (ESD); enterprise and entrepreneurship; and practice.

Section 2 covers distinctive features of the course, including curriculum design, partnership arrangements, flexibility of delivery, progression and ongoing monitoring processes. Section 3 explains any features relevant to teaching, learning and assessment activities for the subject. Section 4 describes the benchmark standards of achievement reached by all graduates with a bachelor's degree with honours in the subject, with some subjects also including achievement at master's level.



Why study a degree in Communication, Media, Film and Cultural Studies?

The increase of degree offerings in Communication, Media, Film and Cultural Studies reflects the expansion of the creative and cultural industries, their economic contributions, and the need for these industries to have new and diverse talent. Graduates in these subject areas demonstrate knowledge, creativity and reflection on how we create, communicate and interpret meaning. Students also make significant contributions outside the creative and cultural industries, and the eclectic relevance and transferability of skills within its fields are part of its core characteristic.

Communication, Media, Film and Cultural Studies are distinguished by their focus on cultural and communicative activities as central forces in shaping economic, political, psychological and social life. Courses in these fields are represented through a diverse range of titles including, for example: advertising; broadcasting; communication studies; cultural studies; subject histories; digital, film, television, media or screen studies; interactive media; journalism; film, television and media production; animation; games studies; publishing; political communication and lobbying; future media; publishing; content creation; cultural management; and public relations.

Within these fields, degree courses are characterised by a diversity of emphases, including theoretical frameworks, research specialisms, practice and applicability, and professional contexts. New degrees in the subjects covered by this statement will continue to emerge, as the field naturally engages with developments and entanglements in and with, for example, cultural sensibilities, emerging technologies and changing forms of practice. Such continued development and diversity of practice is central to these fields and to the development of their students' potential.



What are the main teaching and learning approaches in Communication, Media, Film and Cultural Studies?

Teaching, learning and assessments within the fields of Communication, Media, Film and Cultural Studies are designed to reflect the specific aims, emphases and learning outcomes of the individual courses, and students are made aware of these at the outset.

Students benefit from exploring a wide range of materials and sources, drawn from a range of academic and non-academic contexts.

Teaching and learning strategies in Communication, Media, Film and Cultural Studies promote the following learning processes:

- **awareness raising and knowledge acquisition:** the process through which a student is introduced to, and engages with, new areas of knowledge and experience, and broadens and deepens existing knowledge
- **conceptual and critical understanding:** the process whereby a student engages in critical analysis of texts, fields of knowledge, concepts, and cultural and production practices, testing their analysis against familiar or preconceived understanding
- **practice:** the process through which a student acquires practical experience, skills and the opportunity for creative expression and/or thinking in a range of activities - from empirical research, to production work, to work placements
- **creativity:** utilised in originating and developing innovative ideas, solving problems, design and aesthetics, fostered through personal development and self-awareness
- **literacies:** the process through which students develop confidence in reading the representational, technological and cultural significance of media, film, communication, and cultural texts and contexts
- **critical reflection:** the processes through which a student acquires and reflects on new knowledge and understanding, and on their own learning experiences and performance.



How are students assessed?

Assessment approaches follow the specific aims, emphases and learning outcomes of the degree course, and reflect the range and balance of teaching and learning methods used. Courses seek to ensure that, within the variety of approaches taken, assessment is consistent both in the demands it makes on students and in the standards of judgement it applies.

Communication, Media, Film and Cultural Studies typically draw on a range of diverse assessment methods. Such a varied approach to assessments enhances student experience and employability, caters for a diverse student body, and mitigates the effects of essay mills and advances in generative artificial intelligence.

Assessment methods students may experience include:

- essays of different lengths
- individual or group portfolios of work (whether critical, creative or reflexive, relating to the outcome of professional practice)
- group and individual production artefacts, including, but not restricted to, productions in sound, audiovisual and playable media
- other forms of project-based or creative outputs
- reviews and reports, including those from work placements or simulated work environments
- individual and group presentations and/or pitches (live or recorded)
- critical self and peer-evaluation
- logbooks, diaries and autobiographical writing
- research exercises and projects
- tasks aimed at the assessment of specific skills or professional standards (for example, production, research and skills of application)
- festivals, exhibitions and events
- role, scenarios or text analyses/evaluations
- authentic assessment, such as developing client-based project work, policy documents, working to briefs or completing employment simulations
- developing and pitching media campaigns, business plans for productions or media ventures, promotions or marketing strategies
- seen and unseen examinations and tests, including verbal and non-verbal assessments and online examinations.

Courses in Communication, Media, Film and Cultural Studies are likely to require the production of an extended piece of independent investigation and/or a creative production, portfolio of work, or work-based learning typically undertaken in the final year. This may be discursive, written or production-based, and may be individual or group work. There is usually a significant component of individually assessed work.

In many courses, particularly those that feature practical work, students are participants in the assessment process through strategies such as group critiques, where students present and discuss their work with peers and tutors. Such pedagogy is also becoming more common in theory-focused degrees through students as co-producers in curriculum and assessment design.

Students in Communication, Media, Film and Cultural Studies learn to make effective and ethical use of emerging technologies, while maintaining a critical awareness of how these may alter or challenge established professional norms and practices. This may range from (semi-)automated workflows, accessible user interfaces replacing coding or complex operations, through to use of adaptive technologies, machine learning and artificial intelligence. Assessment strategies should be responsive to these developments, while ensuring students can still be assessed on the requisite subject knowledge, understanding and skills. This should also be seen in the context of preserving academic integrity in relation to use of artificial intelligence.



Benchmark Standards

The minimum threshold standards that a student will have demonstrated when they are awarded an honours degree in Communication, Media, Film and Cultural Studies are outlined on **pages 19-26** of the Subject Benchmark Statement. The vast majority of students will perform significantly better than the minimum threshold standards. Each higher education provider has its own method of determining what appropriate evidence of this achievement will be and should refer to [Annex D in The Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications of UK Degree-Awarding Bodies](#). This Annex sets out common descriptions of the four main degree outcome classifications for bachelor's degrees with honours - 1st, 2.1, 2.2 and 3rd.

The full statement was developed by subject experts drawn from across the sector. Details of the Advisory Group can be found on **page 28** of the full Statement.

Read the full Subject Benchmark Statement

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



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

Published - April 2024

© The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education 2024
Southgate House, Southgate Street, Gloucester GL1 1UB

Registered charity numbers 1062746 and SC037786

Tel: 01452 557000 Web: www.qaa.ac.uk