

A decorative background image showing a view through a scalloped wooden archway. The archway is made of light-colored wood with intricate carvings. Through the arch, a landscape with a hillside, buildings, and a blue sky with light clouds is visible.

Subject Benchmark Statement: Languages, Cultures and Societies

The Basics

This document is a summary of the Subject Benchmark Statement for Languages, Cultures and Societies. It is specifically designed to provide a short and accessible overview of the main statement for students, employers and academics. It is not intended to replace or alter the Subject Benchmark Statement, which should be referred to in the design and approval of courses and when any further detail is required.

Subject Benchmark Statements are an established part of the quality assurance arrangements in UK higher education as non-regulatory, sector-owned reference points, developed and written by academic communities on behalf of their subject. 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 the subject discipline. This includes consideration of the ways in which the discipline addresses wider social goals, specifically in relation to: equity, equality, diversity and inclusion (EEDI); the requirements of disabled students; education for sustainable development (ESD); and, enterprise and entrepreneurship.

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



Why study a degree in Languages, Cultures and Societies?

The study of Languages, Cultures and Societies (LCS) is concerned with acquiring or improving proficiency in one or more languages, as well as understanding, analysing, interpreting and engaging with the cultures and societies where those languages are spoken. LCS courses share as core features, the attainment of communicative proficiency in a language, and the study of aspects of linguistics, cultures and societies, from a broad range of disciplinary and interdisciplinary perspectives. LCS degrees are inherently intercultural in that they enable students to understand how ideas and events cross national, regional and cultural boundaries; to critique the relationships between countries and their communities; and through the study of other cultures, to gain critical insights into the cultures with which they are most familiar.

LCS degrees equip students with the analytical and communicative skills relevant for an interdependent world in which the ability to understand, engage with and mediate between languages, cultures and societies is crucial. The critical skills developed through LCS courses - including close reading, comparative analysis and reasoned argument - help students to understand the diversity and complexity of the world both past and present, how different perspectives on the world are articulated, and where common ground for resolving global issues might be found. As a result, LCS graduates find employment in a wide variety of sectors in the UK and internationally, including the civil and diplomatic service, charities and non-governmental organisations, communication, marketing and public relations, translation and interpreting, education, publishing and the creative industries, and business and commerce.



What are the main teaching and learning approaches in Languages, Cultures and Societies?

Degree courses in LCS typically involve a wide range of learning and teaching methods which will vary depending on the overall aims and objectives of the degree course, the mode of study (in-person or online), the student's starting point, and the nature of the language being studied including features (such as whether it has a standard written form, or not, and whether it is written in alphabetical or other types of script).

Components of LCS courses focusing on the development of language skills, usually include development of the four core language skills of reception, production, interaction and mediation, exposure to the use of material from the cultures being studied, explicit teaching of grammar, and the use of a variety of physical and digital language learning resources to reinforce knowledge and skills gained in learning.

A defining characteristic of LCS courses is the use of the language(s) of study as a gateway to the study of the cultures and societies in which they are used. Typically, courses exploit materials in the language(s) of study in a way that is consistent with students' linguistic proficiency at each level. The multidisciplinary nature of many LCS courses means that the study of those cultures and societies involves a wide range of critical methods drawn from the humanities and social sciences more broadly.

LCS degrees typically require a period of immersive learning in countries where the languages, cultures and societies of study is spoken with the aim of enhancing linguistic proficiency and cultural competence. This includes work or study placements and internships with a range of educational and community organisations, businesses and institutions. Such opportunities are of fundamental value for consolidating the key skills of language acquisition, cultural understanding and intercultural competence that are at the heart of LCS degrees.



How are students assessed?

The diversity of skills and competencies developed by LCS courses require a wide variety of types of assessment, including coursework, examinations, and peer and self-assessment. Assessment of target-language skills involves a range of tests and/or assignments designed to demonstrate linguistic proficiency, fluency, accuracy, comprehension, range, interaction, presentation, sociolinguistic and meta-linguistic awareness, as appropriate, in listening, reading, writing, speaking and mediation (translating and interpreting).

The assessment of modules in linguistic, cultural and social studies is based on a variety of strategies appropriate to the relevant subject. These may include: unseen written examinations (online or in-person), essays, oral presentations, extended essays and dissertations, as well as reflective or creative outputs.

The assessment of LCS courses includes a mix of methods that are accessible to disabled students and students from varying educational and cultural backgrounds within different learning situations. Where individual students may be disadvantaged by particular assessment methods, adjustments to those assessments are considered in conjunction with the provider's procedures, while ensuring fairness across the full cohort. The procedures used for assessment cover the subject knowledge (breadth and depth), abilities and skills developed through the degree course, and assessment design is aimed at alignment with teaching and learning approaches, and desired learning outcomes.



Benchmark Standards

The threshold standards that a student will have demonstrated when they are awarded an undergraduate degree with honours in Languages, Cultures and Societies are outlined on **pages 19-22** of the Subject Benchmark Statement. The vast majority of students will perform significantly better than the minimum threshold standards. Each higher education provider has its own method of determining what appropriate evidence of this achievement will be and should refer to [Annex D: Outcome classification descriptions for FHEQ Level 6 and FQHEIS Level 10 degrees](#). This Annex sets out common descriptions of the four main degree outcome classifications for undergraduate degrees with honours - 1st, 2.1, 2.2 and 3rd.

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

Read the full Subject Benchmark Statement

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



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

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