



Subject Benchmark Statement

English

September 2023



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About this Statement

This document is a QAA Subject Benchmark Statement for English 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. Subject Benchmark Statements are an established part of the quality assurance arrangements in UK higher education, but not a regulatory requirement. They are sector-owned reference points, developed and written by academics on behalf of their subject. Subject Benchmark Statements also describe the nature and characteristics of awards in a particular subject or area. Subject Benchmark Statements are published in QAA's capacity as an expert quality body on behalf of the higher education sector. A summary of the Statement is also available on the QAA website.

Key changes from the previous Subject Benchmark Statement include:

- a revised structure for the Statement, which includes the introduction of cross-cutting themes of:
 - equality, diversity, and inclusion
 - accessibility and the needs of disabled students
 - education for sustainable development
 - employability, entrepreneurship and enterprise education
- a comprehensive review updating the context and purposes, including course design and content in order to inform and underpin the revised benchmark standards.

How can I use this document?

Subject Benchmark Statements are not intended to prescribe any particular approaches to teaching, learning or assessment. Rather, they provide a framework, agreed by the subject community, that forms the basis on which those responsible for curriculum design, approval and update can reflect upon a course, and its component modules. This allows for flexibility and innovation in course design while providing a broadly accepted external reference point for that discipline.

They may also be used as a reference point by external examiners in considering whether the design of a course and the threshold standards of achievement are comparable with those of other higher education providers. They also support professional, statutory and regulatory bodies (PSRBs) with the academic standards expected of students.

You may want to read this document if you are:

- involved in the design, delivery and review of courses in English
- a prospective student thinking about undertaking a course in English
- an employer, to find out about the knowledge and skills generally expected of English graduates.

Relationship to legislation

The responsibility for academic standards lies with the higher education provider which awards the degree. Higher education providers are responsible for meeting the requirements of legislation and any other regulatory requirements placed upon them by their relevant funding and regulatory bodies. This Statement does not interpret legislation, nor does it incorporate statutory or regulatory requirements.

The regulatory status of the Statement will differ with regard to the educational jurisdictions of the UK. In England, Subject Benchmark Statements are not sector-recognised standards as set out under the Office for Students' [regulatory framework](#). However, they are specified as a key reference point for academic standards in Wales under the [Quality Enhancement Review](#) and in Scotland as part of the [Quality Enhancement Framework](#). Subject Benchmark Statements in Northern Ireland are part of the current quality requirements in that nation. Because the Statement describes outcomes and attributes expected at the threshold standard of achievement in a UK-wide context, many higher education providers will use them as an enhancement tool for course design and approval, and for subsequent monitoring and review, in addition to helping demonstrate the security of academic standards.

Additional sector reference points

Higher education providers are likely to consider other reference points in addition to this Statement in designing, delivering and reviewing courses. These may include requirements set out by PSRBs and industry or employer expectations. QAA has also published [Advice and Guidance](#) to support the [Quality Code for Higher Education](#), which will be helpful when using this Statement - for example, in [course design](#), [learning and teaching](#), [external expertise](#) and [monitoring and evaluation](#).

Explanations of unfamiliar terms used in this Subject Benchmark Statement can be found in [QAA's Glossary](#). Sources of information about other requirements and examples of guidance and good practice are signposted within the Statement where appropriate.

1 Context and purposes of an English Degree

1.1 English involves the study of language, literature and the practice of creative writing, and is taught across the four nations of the UK as single, joint and interdisciplinary honours courses. Courses may have a range of titles which include English, and these may specify a particular concentration on one or two of these elements (for example, English Literature; English Language; English Language and Literature; English Literature and Creative Writing). The study of English may also be combined with a range of other subjects as part of joint degree programmes.

1.2 This Statement uses the term 'English' in its broadest sense to include language, literature and relevant aspects of the other subjects with which it is studied. These may include comparative literature, communication, media, film studies, screenwriting, visual culture, cultural studies, translation studies and other related subjects. English courses containing elements of Linguistics or Creative Writing are likely to reference the Subject Benchmark Statements for those subjects, as well as the Subject Benchmark Statement for English

1.3 There is also extensive postgraduate provision focusing on more specialised or interdisciplinary areas of literary, language and creative study. However, this Subject Benchmark Statement and its recommendations are focused on undergraduate courses leading to a named award which includes English in its title.

Purposes and characteristics of an English Degree

1.4 Students of English study meaning through communication in the medium of English and related languages, and develop their understanding through creative, critical and analytical responses. The study of language, of literary and cultural works, and the production of critical and creative work, enable students to interpret and interrogate past and present cultures, to anticipate their future transformations, and to enhance their ability to understand themselves, other people and our shared world. The study of English develops students' abilities to communicate, collaborate, create and think critically - capabilities which enable them to develop as individuals, have rewarding careers and contribute effectively to society and the economy.

1.5 Students of English develop general capabilities shared by the Humanities, sometimes known as the [SHAPE](#) subjects (Social Sciences, Humanities and the Arts for People and the Economy/Environment). These include enhanced capacities for:

- communication, including: the comprehension of complex and extended texts; the ability to structure coherent, convincing and clear arguments and deploy a range of digital skills
- collaboration - working both independently and as an effective member of a team, showing autonomy, flexibility, resilience and self-management
- creativity and imaginative insight
- critical thinking, analysis, problem-solving and innovation.

1.6 While the study of English is characterised by intellectual range and diversity of approaches, it places a distinct emphasis on the study of discourse and meaning in communication, including aesthetics and rhetoric. English graduates can:

- read closely, analytically and critically, with an understanding of literary form and historical and linguistic context
- understand verbal creativity, including aesthetic and other features of literary and other cultural texts

- analyse texts and discourses - written and oral, and respond to the affective and rhetorical power of language, using appropriate approaches and terminology
- reflect critically on the acts of reading, writing and interpretation
- develop independent, imaginative and persuasive interpretations of literary, critical, linguistic or creative material, which may include the generation of new creative work
- articulate a critical understanding of complex texts and ideas and of their historical relations
- communicate - verbally, non-verbally and in writing - clearly, accurately and effectively
- apply scholarly research and bibliographic skills appropriate to the subject.

1.7 The teaching of English seeks to stimulate dialogue, debate and collaboration. English recognises the value of different life experiences and draws on these differences for teaching and learning. Through this, students learn to understand a range of perspectives and to model the engagement with difference and diversity which characterise egalitarian and democratic communities.

Equality, diversity and inclusion

1.8 The discipline of English seeks to engage with richness and human diversity, and is committed to dialogue and to the awareness of radical difference and contested narratives. Staff and students pay close attention to individual and to collective perspectives - from the past and present, and from the regional to the global. They seek to listen, to understand and to respond to all voices, to discover and communicate the meanings and implications (intended and unintended) of their utterances and the stories that they tell, and to examine their own position with respect to perspectives that differ from their own.

1.9 Attention to perspective and to point of view has been fundamental to English since its inception, but the history of the discipline shows that it has been linked with colonial, patriarchal and elitist ambitions. The discipline is aware of the systematic imbalances that persist in the subject, including: uneven access to cultural capital across a more socially-diverse student body; the under-representation in the discipline of marginalised groups; the low proportion of men at undergraduate level; and the disparity between the percentage of women at undergraduate level and in the professoriat.

1.10 The texts and other artefacts English now analyses, the methodologies it uses, and its students and teachers are, however, more heterogeneous than they once were. Work by generations of scholars and students (late 20th century feminists and post-colonial scholars, for example) has enriched the range and diversity of the material studied, and the approaches and methodologies employed, to the good of the subject as a whole. Staff and students have shown great commitment and energy to redressing historical imbalances in English curricula and have been alert not only to questions about what syllabi ought to include, but also to the ways in which modes of thinking about curricula may inadvertently replicate the very inequalities they seek to correct. For instance, models of the centre and the periphery, of the 'core' and the 'optional', may reinforce Eurocentric perspectives: optionality often is, although it need not be, an enabler of or cloak for marginality. English is attentive to calls to further diversify its curricula.

1.11 English seeks to produce graduates who can deploy rigorous, reasoned, well-expressed and well-evidenced arguments to question received wisdoms, and understand, articulate and explain the ways people's experiences issue from the historical, cultural, social-economic and political conditions which enable or circumscribe their choices and opportunities. Graduates are attentive to the audiences of the written and spoken word, to the diversity of literary and linguistic experiences those audiences may encompass, and to the arguments, registers and styles that seek variously to engage, persuade or manipulate.

Accessibility

1.12 English courses are designed to be highly accessible. They use a wide and inclusive range of teaching and learning methods and assessments to support the needs of students. Staff in English reflect current legislation and best practice in the teaching of the subject and engage in discussion with their students to ensure accessible arrangements in terms of seminar room experience, flexible learning resources, and work on field trips, placements and visits. They pay particular attention to areas of practical challenge, such as neurodiversity, students with mental and physical health conditions, students with caring responsibilities, commuting students, and those with religious observance requirements.

1.13 There are many routes of entry into English programmes, including A levels, Scottish Highers, other post-16 qualifications, Access and other forms of accreditation of prior learning. Given the global reach and significance of English, programmes also attract international students. Adult returners to higher education without formal qualification are welcomed in most English departments. The nature of the subject means it is open to individuals with a broad spectrum of disabilities.

Education for Sustainable Development

1.14 [Education for Sustainable Development](#) is an educational change agenda which aims to equip learners with the knowledge, skills, attributes and values required to examine the world critically and collaborate with others in taking informed decisions which contribute to 'environmental integrity, economic viability and a just society for present and future generations, while respecting cultural diversity' (UNESCO, 2019) in pursuit of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals. In developing students' ability to communicate, collaborate, create and think critically, English works towards education for sustainable development.

1.15 English courses often link literature, language or creative practice to sustainability and environmental challenges through exploring the relationship between humans and the natural environment across different periods and discourses, and between different modes and genres of writing. Ecocriticism places the environment at the centre of its interpretative focus. Study of world literatures in English and of global varieties of the English language fosters a global perspective as well as understanding of linguistic and cultural diversity, translation and exchange. Reflection on the history of the subject entails engagement with Britain's colonial past and its links to the environmental and social impact of resource extraction around the world. The study of English contributes to an ethos of global citizenship as students become aware of their own norms and values, and reflect on their own situation in a multilingual world with contested histories.

1.16 The emphasis on creativity, imagination and independence in English, as well as the diverse perspectives involved in the study of language, literature and creative writing, encourage and enable students to approach problems from innovative perspectives. Learners are supported in assimilating knowledge from the past and present and in projecting their understanding forward to anticipated futures. This makes students of English well placed to synthesise different approaches and to embrace the multi-disciplinary perspectives necessary to develop sustainable solutions for the future of the planet.

Enterprise and entrepreneurship education

1.17 [Enterprise and entrepreneurship education](#) supports behaviours, attributes and competencies that are likely to have a significant impact on the individual student in terms of successful careers. It prepares students for changing environments, and provides enhanced impact through placements and activities that build links between academic institutions and external organisations.

1.18 The study of English develops students' ability to communicate, collaborate, create, and think critically and analytically. English graduates generate cultural, social and economic value through self-determined, rewarding and resilient careers and community engagement.

1.19 Because of the emphasis on effective and persuasive communication, the study of English enhances enterprise and entrepreneurship because students understand complex social contexts and relationships across histories and across cultures and work with many different perspectives and experiences. In doing this, they cultivate skills in inference and interpretation, and learn to use a range of discourses. They study and produce representations, narratives and arguments which understand, empathise with, engage, inform, persuade and inspire others.

1.20 The experience of collaboration builds skills in enterprise and entrepreneurship, as students of English learn to work in a variety of contexts and adapt and rise to different challenges. They become self-managing, adept at working with and responding to others, and learn to act with integrity and an understanding of both their own values and the values of others.

1.21 Creativity is fundamental to all aspects of English. Students of English demonstrate open-mindedness, initiative and independent thinking, as well as abilities in innovation, problem-solving and solution finding. Resilience is also core to creativity and to entrepreneurship, and the subject builds this capability. This interest in innovation means that students are confident in using and exploiting new technologies.

1.22 The subject of English enhances the critical and analytic thinking that is crucial for enterprise and entrepreneurship, by encouraging curiosity, questioning, observation, pattern recognition, and problem identification. Paying intense attention both to detail and to context, students learn how to apply knowledge to solve complex problems, develop, select, test and refine ideas, make decisions and draw conclusions.

2 Distinctive features of an English Degree

Design

2.1 English provision across the sector is characterised by a diversity of approaches, methodologies and conceptual assumptions.

2.2 Depending on the aspects of the subject they have studied, graduates who have studied English will know about:

- the expressive resources of language
- literature and/or language from different periods and the range of principal literary genres across prose, poetry and drama
- the breadth of literatures in English
- regional and global varieties of the English language
- the history, structure, levels and discourse functions of the English language
- how culture, language, technology and economics affect how, where and by whom texts are produced and received
- the roles of readers and audiences in shaping texts
- the relationships between different genres and different media
- critical, theoretical, linguistic and stylistic concepts and terminology.

2.3 More detail is given below in paragraphs 3.2-3.4.

Progression

2.4 Over the course of a degree with honours (FHEQ Level 6; FQHEIS Level 10), a student of English will progress from one level of study to the next, in line with the regulations and processes for each provider. At each level, the attainment of knowledge, expertise and experience builds towards the final achievement of meeting the threshold-level subject-specific and generic skills listed in this Statement. This will usually include successful completion and the award of credit for the full range of learning and assessment, including any practical components. Upon graduation from an undergraduate degree, it would be expected that a student who had achieved a second-class degree or higher would be capable of, and equipped for, undertaking postgraduate study in English or a related discipline. Entry requirements to postgraduate courses are, however, determined by individual providers and may require specified levels and types of achievement at undergraduate level.

2.5 Undergraduates studying a combined, joint or major-minor route will achieve learning outcomes relating to English, and will add more according to their other subjects. Students may also explore the interface between different disciplines, creating further opportunities for interdisciplinary study.

2.6 Students undertaking an honours degree may exit earlier and be eligible for a Certificate of Higher Education, a Diploma of Higher Education, or other awards depending upon the levels of study completed to a satisfactory standard. At providers in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, the standard duration of a full-time undergraduate course is three years. Scottish undergraduate master's degrees with honours are typically designed to include four years of study, which relates to the structure of Scottish primary and secondary education. For students following part-time routes, their study time would be the equivalent of the three or four-year degree.

Accessibility and flexibility

2.7 English may be taught and assessed in increasingly accessible and flexible ways that support the strengths and needs of the individual student, including part-time and mature students. Programmes make use of a wide and inclusive range of teaching and learning methods and assessments. Examples characteristic of English courses are:

- responsive design, which allows changes of text, assessment methods or other reasonable adjustments which support individual circumstances
- diversity of assessment methods which enable every student to show what they know, how they think or create
- a full range of teaching activities which capture the range of different circumstances and diverse approaches to learning in any student group
- digital resources designed with accessibility as a central focus.

Partnership

2.8 Work placements or work-related projects may be provided in any role which draws on the dispositions and skills of an English degree. Graduates who have studied English, like graduates who have studied other SHAPE disciplines, develop a wide range of transferable skills and aptitudes, so work placements or work-related projects may be provided from a very wide range of professions and roles, covering the cultural, entertainment and educational sectors, publishing, journalism, law, retail management, marketing and finance. Degree programmes frequently offer work placement modules or semesters, and sandwich years are becoming increasingly common. These may take place in partnership with organisations related to degree content, such as theatres, libraries or museums, but just as frequently may involve partnership with organisations unrelated to the subject matter of the students' degree.

Monitoring and review

2.9 A major feature of academic quality assurance and enhancement at a higher education institution is having in place monitoring and regular review processes for the courses it delivers. Degree-awarding bodies, and their collaborative partnerships, routinely collect and analyse information and undertake periodic course review according to their own needs; considering the student voice forms part of this. They draw on a range of external reference points, including this Statement, to ensure that their provision aligns with sector norms. Monitoring and evaluation are a periodic assessment of a course, conducted internally or by external independent evaluators. Evaluation uses information from both current and historic monitoring to develop an understanding of student achievement or inform future course planning.

2.10 External scrutiny is an essential component of the quality assurance system in the UK. Providers will use external reviewers as part of periodic review to gain an external perspective on any proposed changes and ensure threshold standards are achieved and content is appropriate for the subject.

2.11 The external examiner system currently in use across the UK higher education sector also helps to ensure consistency in the way academic standards are secured by degree-awarding bodies. Typically, external examiners will be asked to comment on the types, principles and purposes of assessments being offered to students. They will consider the types of modules on offer and the outcomes of a student cohort, and how these compare to similar provision offered within other UK higher education providers. External examiners are asked to produce a report each year and make recommendations for changes to

modules and assessments (where appropriate). Subject Benchmark Statements, such as this one, can play an important role in supporting external examiners in advising on whether threshold standards are being met in a specific subject area.

2.12 Courses with professional and vocational outcomes may also require evaluation and accreditation from professional and regulatory bodies. These are usually done through a combination of site visits and desk-based reviews.

3 Content, structure and delivery

Content

3.1 English courses vary in design and structure, are characterised by a diversity of methodologies and conceptual approaches, and may be taught in combination with a number of other subjects.

3.2 The study of English language involves the investigation and analysis of spoken, written and multimodal communication and culture. Courses explore all types and varieties of English, including its origins and historical development, its regional and national expressions, its contemporary global circulation, and its potential future forms. Students investigate the structure and use of varieties of English and the historical, social, geographical, cultural, political and other contextual factors that shape its use. Descriptive, critical and theoretical approaches to language are explored through key sub-disciplinary areas such as pragmatics, stylistics, discourse analysis, historical linguistics, dialectology, sociolinguistics, phonetics, semantics, language acquisition, language standardisation, Global Englishes, TESOL, and corpus-based, forensic and cognitive approaches. Students undertake qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods analyses of a wide range of texts, from everyday casual spoken communication to highly stylised formal and literary written discourse.

3.3 The study of English literature involves the close, analytical reading and interpretation of prose, poetry and drama, in written, oral or digital form. It may include performance, the moving image, visual and aural media and multimodal texts. Texts may be in any of the dialects and languages of the British Isles or Global Englishes. Comprehension and comparison between texts from different periods and from different cultural contexts is important to the study of literature. Single honours English Literature students will normally encounter texts from before 1800, and may gain knowledge of literature from one or more early periods (Medieval and Renaissance periods, 17th and 18th centuries), as may some students on joint degrees. Many courses include the study of a wide range of Anglophone literatures produced from a global range of English-speaking cultures and societies. Courses may also include texts in translation. Students engage with stylistic, formal and rhetorical properties of texts, sometimes drawing explicitly on ideas from modern language study, and learn how these contribute to meaning. They study the interconnections between texts, the relationship between literature and other forms of expression, the interaction of literature with social, historical and cultural contexts, theoretical approaches to and debates about literature, literary and critical theories, and the impact of texts on their environments. They also examine the processes of composition and production, histories of reception, and forms of dissemination, including manuscript, print, digital and performance.

3.4 Central to creative writing courses is a process of reflection on the development of individual and peer writing practices informed by diverse and critical reading of writing produced in a wide range of social, historical and cultural contexts. More information can be found in the Creative Writing Subject Benchmark Statement. The study of Creative Writing in the context of English enables students to develop their own creative practices informed by a detailed understanding of existing works of literature and their workings and effects. Creative writing students evaluate their own creative practices and those of others, utilising the analytical tools and approaches common to the study of language and literature, seen from the perspective of practice, and engaging with writings on writing and wider critical theory. In doing so, they gain insights into themselves, others and the wider world. Original works produced by students may include poetry, fiction, drama, visual media and creative non-fiction and are not restricted by genre, format, medium or style of writing. Students are given opportunities to explore the complex interactive relationships between writer, publisher, text

and audience. Creative writing emphasises the discipline of learning to write to specific briefs, the importance of the drafting and editing process, and the benefits of working collaboratively.

Teaching and learning

3.5 English uses a range of approaches to teaching and learning which stimulate dialogue and debate, encourage collaboration, recognise the value of different life experiences and help students understand a range of perspectives. Teaching and learning in English balances dialogue, direct instruction, independent study, collaborative group and project work alongside facilitated opportunities for active questioning and debate with peers and tutors. Communication and discussion of ideas are central, and English prizes the co-creation of knowledge with students. In English, planning, drafting and writing are seen as vehicles for learning as well as outcomes and forms of assessment. Scheduled activities may include lectures, seminars, workshops, tutorials and personal supervision, as well as structured online activity and sessions outside the classroom, including performances and field trips. Where online activities form part of learning and teaching, there will usually be a mixture of synchronous engagement and access to pre-recorded learning materials.

3.6 Preparation for classes is clearly structured through provision of detailed instructor guidance, including signposting of relevant resources, and clearly prioritised suggestions for further reading. Preparation is designed to deepen and enhance knowledge while also allowing for and encouraging creative response, imagination and independent judgement by learners.

3.7 Collaborative and individual independent study of materials is fundamental to learning and teaching in English. There is a strong emphasis placed on direct engagement with primary and secondary materials outside of the classroom and prior to scheduled teaching so that learners are empowered in their approach to subject content, and develop autonomy and self-efficacy in relation to their learning. Lectures will very often take a 'flipped' approach with learners expected to read materials and formulate their own responses prior to class discussion. They will then be encouraged to deepen their engagement through self-reflection on the materials, on their own responses and on alternative perspectives encountered in the classroom.

3.8 Small-group teaching (seminars, tutorials, workshops) is particularly emphasised in English because of the opportunities it provides for dialogue and discussion, and for learning activities such as questioning and debate, peer critique and feedback. The demonstration and practice of skills and aptitudes in action is as central to learning in English as the exhibition of subject knowledge; collaboration and creativity are fostered through small-group teaching.

3.9 The nature of the discipline means that English makes extensive and active use of libraries, archives and digital resources such as language corpora and online databases. Many courses lead to a capstone dissertation or research project in which learners formulate, plan and execute an independent course of enquiry and study leading to the creation of an extended essay, analysis, report or creative output.

Assessment

3.10 English encourages a diversity of assessment types; this diversity develops the students' ability to communicate, collaborate, create and think critically. Flexibility in assessment types also serves to make the subject accessible to all students.

3.11 Forms of assessment used in English may include:

- essays
- examinations (including unseen, pre-released and open-book or 'take-away' exams)
- independent research projects and dissertations requiring scholarly and empirical research (these may sometimes be completed in collaboration with peers)
- verbal, non-verbal and interactive activity (including formal presentations, seminar performance, online discussion, dramatic performance)
- the production of creative and critical digital objects (such as editions of literary texts, web pages, blogs, videos, wikis, podcasts)
- external placement or work-based learning reports
- tasks aimed at developing specific skills (for example, digital literacies, bibliographical exercises, précis and summary, and editing tasks)
- portfolios of creative and critical writing (which may include fiction, drama, poetry, reflective journals, essay plans, annotated bibliographies, critical reviews).

3.12 Assessment in English rewards:

- critical, creative, and analytical thinking
- the ability to construct rigorous, incisive and cogent arguments
- breadth and depth of subject knowledge (including relevant contextual knowledge)
- understanding of form, genre and of linguistic and literary concepts and devices, and of the way in which they may operate in texts to communicate meaning
- analysis and interpretation, and the ability to evaluate literary and linguistic forms and other cultural artefacts
- engagement with arguments and debates; and the ability to negotiate disagreement and to recognise and understand ambiguity and multiplicity of meanings
- independence and originality of approach in interpretative and written practice
- rigour and precision in the deployment and evaluation of data and evidence
- persuasive expression, appropriate to the intended audience
- fluent, effective and imaginative communication of ideas, sophisticated writing ability, and an understanding of writing as a process which includes revision and editing

4 Benchmark standards

Introduction

4.1 This Subject Benchmark Statement sets out the minimum threshold standards that a student will have demonstrated when they are awarded an honours degree in English. Demonstrating these standards over time will show that a student has achieved the range of knowledge, understanding and skills expected of graduates in English.

4.2 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 bachelor's degrees with honours - 1st, 2.1, 2.2 and 3rd.

<p style="text-align: center;">Threshold Standard</p> <p>This is the minimum requirement that should be reached by graduates of a bachelor's degree with honours.</p> <p>Graduates who have studied English as a significant component of their degree are able to:</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Typical Standard</p> <p>This is the level of attainment reached by the typical student whose results fall into the main cluster.</p> <p>Graduates who have studied English as a significant component of their degree are able to:</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Excellent Standard</p> <p>Graduates who have attained an excellent standard demonstrate to a higher level the capabilities and skills and show evidence of extensive independent reading, originality of thought and expression, and in-depth understanding. Excellent work displays wide-ranging knowledge of the subject and applies it in subtle and effective ways, showing exceptional critical insight, analytic rigour and creativity.</p> <p>Graduates are able to:</p>
<p>Generic skills</p>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • communicate clearly verbally, non-verbally and in writing, structuring lucid arguments, using effective expression appropriate to the intended audience • understand writing as a process which includes revision and editing. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • communicate clearly verbally, non-verbally and in writing, structuring lucid, coherent and rigorous arguments using persuasive, effective expression, incorporating the arguments of others • position themselves clearly with respect to those other arguments, appropriate to the intended audience • deploy a reflective approach to the process of writing that deploys revision to improve writing from draft to draft. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • communicate clearly, verbally, non-verbally and in writing, including structuring lucid, coherent, rigorous and incisive arguments in support of complex, challenging and cogently expressed central claims • identify and articulate strengths and weaknesses of the arguments of other writers concisely and accurately • amend and develop positions in light of new evidence and

Threshold Standard	Typical Standard	Excellent Standard
		<p>claims, appropriate to the intended audience</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • deploy a disciplined commitment to their own writing, reading and re-reading their own prose before submission.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • recognise that language can have affective power and can manipulate as well as persuade • be aware of implied audiences of texts, and of the need to temper their own writing to specific audiences. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • recognise and respond to the affective power of language, using appropriate approaches and terminology, and to communicate clearly and coherently to different audiences. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • analyse the affective power of language, using approaches and terminology appropriate to specific and defined audiences • exceptional students have a command of rhetoric that enables them to persuade and sometimes move their own readers and are adroit in handling sensitive topics and challenging material.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • be comfortable with technology and digital communication and use a variety of digital platforms. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • be comfortable with technology and digital communication and able to confidently use a variety of digital platforms. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • deploy multiple digital platforms and may inventively exploit new technologies in the communication of their work.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • both collaborate and work independently showing autonomy, flexibility, resilience and self-management • develop working relationships with others in teams. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • both collaborate and work independently, showing autonomy, flexibility, resilience and self-management; demonstrate skills essential to teamwork - such as constructive dialogue (for example, listening, asking and responding to questions); and adopt discrete tasks and roles within a group - such as rapporteur, scribe, leader. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • both collaborate and work independently, showing autonomy, flexibility, resilience and self-management • be a proficient participator in teamwork: listen to others, ask intelligent questions and respond constructively to questions, even critical ones • be adept in encompassing a wide range of perspectives, attitudes, ethics and ideologies • be often essential to their group's success, either in an overt leadership role, or through skills - such as the negotiation of disagreement so as to arrive at consensus.

Threshold Standard	Typical Standard	Excellent Standard
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • be creative; develop interpretations of literary, critical, linguistic or creative material in interpretative and written practice. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • be creative; develop independent and imaginative interpretations of literary, critical, linguistic or creative material, showing independence of approach in interpretative and written practice. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • be creative, develop independent and imaginative interpretations of literary, critical, linguistic or creative material showing independence and originality of approach in interpretative and written practice.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • think critically and display powers of understanding, analysis and interpretation • articulate a critical understanding of complex texts and ideas and of their historical relations • reflect critically upon the acts of reading and writing; evaluate literary and linguistic forms and other cultural artefacts • show rigour and precision in the deployment and evaluation of data and evidence • follow arguments and debates, negotiate disagreement and recognise ambiguity. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • think critically and display wide powers of understanding, analysis and interpretation • articulate an advanced critical understanding of complex texts and ideas and of their historical relations • reflect critically and rigorously upon the acts of reading and writing; evaluate literary and linguistic forms and other cultural artefacts • show rigour and precision in the deployment and evaluation of data and evidence • engage with arguments and debates, negotiate disagreement and recognise and understand the uses of ambiguity. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • think critically and display extensive powers of understanding, analysis and interpretation • articulate a sophisticated critical understanding of complex texts and ideas, and of their historical relations • reflect critically and in precise detail upon the acts of reading and writing • evaluate literary and linguistic forms and other cultural artefacts in a wide intellectual and historical context • show rigour and precision in the deployment and evaluation of data and evidence • engage actively with arguments and debates, negotiate disagreement highly effectively; and understand, analyse and appreciate the roles and value of ambiguity.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • identify, gather, synthesise, organise, and deploy some evidence in the support of an argument. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • process and interpret the evidence they gather, situating it in wider contexts and formulating research questions to further their investigations. Students at the lower end of this scale may tend to cite evidence in a descriptive rather than analytic register. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • interpret and analyses evidence they have gathered, independently and critically; construct well-defined lines of enquiry to produce cogent, well-structured arguments and decisive judgments which articulate a critical understanding of complex texts and ideas.

Threshold Standard	Typical Standard	Excellent Standard
Subject knowledge		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> understand the technique of close reading. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> deploy close reading techniques: at the lower second-class standard this may be formulaic or descriptive rather than analytic, and only loosely connected to an overall argument; at the upper-second class standard, students tend to anchor observations generated through close reading more substantially in their own arguments. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> develop incisive, original observations from sustained close attention to passages from texts, which pay attention where appropriate to form, device and figures of speech, are clearly related to an interpretation of the whole text and seamlessly embedded in the argument of the assignment.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> show awareness that interpretation of a text implies a potential plurality of meaning and understand that although interpretation implies potential plurality of meaning and often ambiguity, this does not mean that all interpretation is simply a matter of personal opinion. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> show the ability to evaluate the grounds and value of different interpretations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> recognise the richness of language and its ability to carry multiple and often ambiguous meanings, of the role of readers in shaping texts, and of texts in shaping the responses of readers.
<p>The subject knowledge (including relevant contextual knowledge) will vary depending on the elements of the degree. The breadth, depth and range of knowledge will vary over the threshold, typical and excellent standards.</p> <p>For language elements, this may include the investigation and analysis of spoken, written and multimodal communication and culture; the origins and historical development of English; its regional, national and global circulation; the structure and use of varieties of English; knowledge of key subdisciplinary areas, and of qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods of analysis. Students will understand and deploy critical, theoretical, linguistic and stylistic concepts and terminology, and apply scholarly bibliographic skills appropriate to the subject.</p> <p>For literature elements, this may include close, analytical reading; knowledge of stylistic, expressive, formal and rhetorical properties of texts; the interconnections between literary texts and other forms of expression; awareness of pre-1800 texts for single honours English; alertness to the social, historical and cultural contexts of the processes of composition and production of texts, the histories of their reception and forms of dissemination. Students will engage with literature and/or language from different periods and from the full range of principal literary genres across prose, poetry and drama; students will understand and deploy critical, theoretical, linguistic and stylistic concepts and terminology and apply scholarly bibliographic skills appropriate to the subject.</p> <p>For Creative Writing elements in the context of English, this may include a process of reflection on the development of individual and peer writing practices informed by broad and critical reading of writing produced in a wide range of social, historical and cultural contexts; understanding the complex interactive relationship between writers, publishers, texts and audiences; developing the discipline of writing to specific briefs, and showing awareness of the importance of the drafting process and the benefits of working collaboratively. Students will understand and deploy critical, theoretical, linguistic and stylistic concepts and terminology and apply scholarly bibliographic skills appropriate to the subject.</p>		

Threshold Standard	Typical Standard	Excellent Standard
<p>Embedded understanding of EDI, access, sustainability and entrepreneurship</p> <p>Graduates who have studied English as a significant component of their degree are able to:</p>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> understand and carry out a variety of assessment tasks, including the initiation and completion, under supervision, of lengthy projects of their own understand the necessity of planning time to meet multiple deadlines, and recognise the advisability of delivering material to those deadlines, although they may not always do so. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> adapt agilely to different demands and tasks take responsibility for their own work and be proactive in seeking assistance if they need it plan their time to deliver material to multiple stipulated deadlines. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> respond creatively and independently to assessment tasks be proactive in seeking help if they need it manage their time efficiently, juggling competing demands to meet deadlines, and leaving time to revise and proofread work before its submission.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> be aware of the existence of multiple perspectives, from past and present, and regional to global, and recognise the importance of listening to alternative perspectives, whether they meet them in their learning spaces, or in written texts. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> listen to other perspectives, including those with which they may disagree articulate those perspectives fairly and position their own opinions within a spectrum of views. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> be sensitive to cultural contexts and shared or unshared backgrounds when working with others articulate those perspectives fairly and position their own opinions precisely within a spectrum of views.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> be aware of the necessity to show academic integrity and ethical responsibility in the use of writing and research of other people, including in the use of large language models (sometimes known as artificial intelligence) as aids for writing, although their bibliographies and citations may be occasionally inaccurate. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> show academic integrity and ethical responsibility in the use of writing and research of others including in the use of large language models (sometimes known as artificial intelligence) as aids for writing offer clear, comprehensive bibliographies, and accurate citations of the work of others. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> show academic integrity and ethical responsibility in the use of writing and research of others including in the use of large language models (sometimes known as artificial intelligence) as aids for writing construct clear, comprehensive bibliographies, with consistent and accurate citation and referencing throughout.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> be aware of the benefits of paying attention to feedback received from staff and/or peers, although they may need encouragement to address that feedback may need structure to enable them to offer peer-to-peer feedback. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> pay attention to feedback received from staff and/or from peers. (Students at the lower level may need encouragement to address feedback; stronger students are more likely to seek it out) offer constructive and supportive suggestions to peers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> engage consistently closely with feedback they receive from staff and from peers, using feedback to reflect on their own practices and assumptions will proactively seek out feedback and use it to improve their written and oral communication.

Threshold Standard	Typical Standard	Excellent Standard
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • understand and effectively transfer the communication, collaboration, creativity and critical thinking skills and the experience of, for example, the development of research questions, self-directed study, and working both independently and with others, to employment and social and commercial entrepreneurship • have learned to act with integrity and an understanding of both their own values and the values of others. 		
<p>Graduates who have studied Creative Writing as a significant component of their degree are able to:</p>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • generate creative work; develop it through editing and revision • show awareness of different audiences and modes of dissemination, and read and respond to published creative work and work in progress. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • generate and develop original creative work and conduct research to support their writing, which they understand as a form of research in itself • deploy the rules, conventions and possibilities of written and spoken language in a range of forms, genres and media, aware of the historical and cultural dimensions of language use and literature, including media technologies • read and respond critically and practically to published work and to work in progress. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • creatively integrate and combine all the qualities in the descriptors with independent enterprise and flair to produce ambitious, markedly original work • deploy a creative and discriminating engagement with the expressive and imaginative powers of language.
<p>For a full expression of Creative Writing benchmark standards, please consult the Creative Writing Benchmark Statement.</p>		

5 List of references and further resources

The British Academy (2020) Social Sciences, Humanities and the Arts for People and the Economy/Environment (SHAPE)

www.thebritishacademy.ac.uk/this-is-shape

QAA (2019) The UK Quality Code for Higher Education

www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code

QAA and Advance HE (2021) *Education for Sustainable Development Guidance*

www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code/education-for-sustainable-development

QAA (2018) *Enterprise and Entrepreneurship Education: Guidance for UK Higher Education Providers*

www.qaa.ac.uk/docs/qaa/about-us/enterprise-and-entrepreneurship-education-2018.pdf

6 Membership of the Advisory Groups for the Subject Benchmark Statement for English

Membership of the Advisory Group for the Subject Benchmark Statement for English 2023

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QAA and the Advisory Group wish to express our gratitude to the late Dr Antonella Castelvvedere. She was dedicated to her students and her work on the Advisory Group demonstrated her deep commitment to teaching and to the highest educational standards, as well as her extensive knowledge of the subject.

Membership of the Advisory Group for the Subject Benchmark Statement for English 2019

The fourth edition, published in 2019, was revised by QAA to align the content with the revised UK Quality Code for Higher Education, published in 2018. Proposed revisions were checked and verified by the Chair of the review group of the Subject Benchmark Statement for English from 2015.

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Fifth edition

Published - September 2023

© The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education 2023
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Registered charity numbers 1062746 and SC037786
www.qaa.ac.uk