

MA COMMUNICATION AND LANGUAGE SKILLS

**Programme Specification
2016**

Primary Purpose:

Course management, monitoring and quality assurance.

Secondary Purpose:

Detailed information for students, staff and employers. Current students should refer to the related Course Handbook for further detail.

Disclaimer:

The University of Portsmouth has checked the information given in this Programme Specification and believes it to be correct. We will endeavour to deliver the course in keeping with this Programme Specification but reserve the right to change the content, timetabling and administration of the course whilst maintaining equivalent academic standards and quality.

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Programme Specification

1. Named Awards

MA Communication and Language Skills

2. Course Code (and UCAS Code if applicable)

C1701F / P

To view units and course structures please visit www.port.ac.uk/unitwebsearch and enter the 'C' code above to find the correct course.

3. Awarding Body

University of Portsmouth

4. Teaching Institution

University of Portsmouth

5. Accrediting Body

6. QAA Benchmark Groups

7. Document Control Information

August 2016

8. Effective Session

2016-2017

9. Author

Janet Bryant, Principal Lecturer, Curriculum Development and Quality Assurance

10. Faculty

Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences

11. Department

School of Languages and Area Studies

12. Educational Aims

- To provide a challenging and stimulating study environment
- To provide a framework allowing students to follow a flexible coherent programme of study
- To enable students to obtain a detailed understanding of the nature of communication from the perspective of relevant disciplines such as linguistics, sociology and psychology
- And to be able to apply that theoretical and analytical understanding to the production of texts of different types
- To provide students with opportunities to pursue an in-depth analysis of a selected topic
- To provide students with an opportunity to develop key communication skills
- To equip students with the necessary transferable skills for lifelong learning and flexibility in the context of changing labour markets

- To provide students with the skills and knowledge required to maximise career opportunities

13. Reference Points

- Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ)
- The University of Portsmouth postgraduate curriculum framework
- Framework for HE Qualifications
- QAA Codes of Practice
- Research and scholarship of the staff involved in the programme

14. Learning Outcomes

Graduates will have an appreciation of the fundamental concepts, modes of analysis and theoretical approaches in relevant dimensions of semiotics, linguistics, sociolinguistics and psycholinguistics applied to communication. They will have an enhanced understanding of how these theories and modes of analysis can be applied to practical text production. Additionally, they will be able to engage in practical, high-quality text production according to different agendas, including, where appropriate, in languages other than English.

Thus students will be able to:

- Demonstrate a detailed knowledge of various areas of semiotic, linguistic, sociolinguistics and psycholinguistic analysis
- Analyse and describe, coherently and independently, English and other languages
- Explain the cognitive processes underlying the comprehension and production of spoken and written language
- Recognise that language is not a monolithic structure and how it is used in particular social and cultural contexts
- Produce high-quality texts according to different agendas
- Where appropriate, translate and interpret from and into a foreign language
- Undertake an independent, in-depth investigation in one or more of the following areas: semiotics, linguistics, sociolinguistics, psycholinguistics applied to communication situations; translation studies or issues in the field of marketing

A. Knowledge and Understanding of:

1. Relevant analytical concepts in semiotics, linguistics, sociolinguistics and psycholinguistics
2. Advanced data collection techniques
3. The need for a systematic approach to linguistic phenomena and how theory helps to organise the understanding of practical, high-quality text production
4. The reasons for, and the criteria for evaluating alternative analyses of a given set of data

Learning and Teaching Strategies and Methods

- Lectures; seminars; workshops; presentations; group and individual tutorials
- Planning, designing and executing a piece of rigorous enquiry in a research project
- Short exercises involving data analysis
- Independent reading
- Use of data, resources, contacts and literature for the development of analytical skills
- The use of computer software
- Reflection on personal experience

Assessment

Assessment is not only evaluative; it is also formative and diagnostic. Consequently, students will be provided with constructive feedback where appropriate. The rationale for assessment will be clearly presented to students and there will be clear, explicit assessment criteria for all forms of assessment.

Assessment will take the form of:

- Essays;
- Production and evaluation of high-quality texts for specific audiences;
- Individual and group project reports;
- Individual and group presentations;
- Short exercises involving data analysis;
- Portfolio of tasks;
- Tasks aimed at the assessment of specific skills (e.g. IT skills, transcription skills, use of technology for language purposes, translation skills);
- A dissertation.

B. Cognitive (Intellectual or Thinking) Skills, able to:

1. Assessing the merits of contrasting theories and explanations, including those of other disciplines.
2. Abstracting and synthesising information.
3. Constructing and managing an argument.
4. Thinking and judging independently.
5. Critically judging and evaluating evidence, in particular in relation to the use of language in specific modes, genres and contexts, in non-academic domains (textual analysis and design, relational aspects of language use, language in social, professional and other occupational contexts, translation and interpretation).
6. Awareness of the relation between knowledge of language and critical evaluation and implementation of language in social life.
7. Recognising problems and developing problem-solving strategies.
8. Collecting, analysing and manipulating data of diverse kinds.
9. Using a variety of methods, and assessing the advantages and disadvantages of each method.
10. Writing essays and research reports using the appropriate register and style.
11. Advanced literacy and numeracy.
12. Critical reflection on experience.

Learning and Teaching Strategies and Methods

- Lectures; seminars; workshops; presentations; group and individual tutorials;
- Planning, designing and executing a piece of rigorous enquiry in a research project;
- Short exercises involving data analysis;
- Independent reading;
- Use of date, resources, contacts and literature for the development of analytical skills;

the use of computer software and other technology. Assessment

- Assessment will take the form of:
- Essays;
- Production and evaluation of texts for specific purposes;
- Individual and group project reports;
- Individual and group presentations;
- Short exercises involving data analysis;
- Portfolio of tasks;
- Tasks aimed at the assessment of specific skills (eg. IT skills, transcription skills, translation skills);
- A dissertation.

C. Practical (Professional or Subject) Skills, able to:

1. To produce high-quality text according to a variety of different agendas.
2. To apply advanced techniques for collecting data, including electronic ones.
3. To apply these advanced techniques for the analysis of data, including the use of corpus analytic techniques.

4. To consider the ethical issues involved in data collection and storage.

Learning and Teaching Strategies and Methods

- Lectures; seminars; workshops; presentations; group and individual tutorials;
- Planning, designing and executing a piece of rigorous enquiry in a research project;
- Short exercises involving data analysis;
- Independent reading;
- Use of data, resources, contacts and literature for the development of analytical skills;
- The use of computer software and other technology.

Assessment

- Essays;
- Production and evaluation of high-quality texts for specific purposes;
- Individual and group project reports;
- Short exercises involving data analysis;
- Portfolio of tasks;
- Tasks aimed at the assessment of specific skills (e.g. IT skills, transcription skills, translation skills);
- A dissertation.

D. Transferable (Graduate and Employability) Skills, able to:

The personal transferable skills students can develop include among others:

1. Collection, understanding, analysis, interpretation and critical evaluation of complex information.
2. Construction, analysis and critical evaluation of theoretical and complex argumentation.
3. Recognising problems, and developing problem-solving strategies.
4. Communicating effectively and fluently in speech and writing using appropriate register
5. Working independently, demonstrating initiative, self-organisation and time-management.
6. Managing their own learning self-critically, and thinking and judging independently.
7. Acquiring complex information of diverse kinds, from a variety of sources including electronic sources (libraries, internet, corpora, discussions with peers etc.) and using other IT tools.

Learning and Teaching Strategies and Methods

- Seminars; workshops; presentations; group and individual tutorials;
- Planning, designing and executing a piece of rigorous enquiry in a research project;
- Short exercises involving data analysis;
- Independent reading and writing;
- Use of data, resources, contacts and literature for the development of analytical skills;
- The use of computer software.
- Working with others to achieve common goals.

Assessment

- Essays;
- Production and evaluation of high-quality texts for specific purposes;
- Individual and group project reports;
- Individual and group presentations;
- Short exercises involving data analysis;
- Portfolio of tasks;
- Tasks aimed at the assessment of specific skills (e.g. IT skills),
- A dissertation.
-

15. Course Structure, Progression and Award Requirements

Standard University rules apply. The regulations must be consulted for a full description of exit awards.

However, it is possible to give the following brief summary. Students require 180 credits for the MA award, 120 credits for a Dip HE award, and 60 credits for a Cert HE award.

Each credit is equivalent to 10 hours of student learning, and units are offered in 30 credit blocks, apart from the final dissertation which is worth 60 credits. Courses can be followed over one year (FT) or two years (PT).

16. Employability Statement

The degree has a clear work focus in several units, including the core unit (Analysing Discourse), the communication in the work place option and the Intercultural Communication option. In addition students are actively encouraged to have work-based focus in their dissertations or in their Independent Learning projects. This is supported through the personal tutor system and the supervision provided in support of the *Dissertation* which both give specific support in career planning.

17. Support for Student Learning

- The Course is managed by a Course Leader.
- Induction programme introduces the student to the University and their course.
- Each student has a personal tutor, responsible for pastoral support and guidance.
- The department has a number of Learning Support Tutors to support students in their learning
- The Placement and Internship Office (PIC) is located in the department, offering advice and support
- University support services include careers, financial advice, housing, counselling etc.
- The Academic Skills Unit (ASK).
- The Additional Support and Disability Advice Centre (ASDAC).
- Excellent library facilities.
- The University of Portsmouth has consistently been awarded an excellent rating for student support and guidance in a number of Quality Assurance Agency inspections.
- Student course and unit handbooks provide information about the course structure and University regulations etc.
- Feedback is provided for all assessments.
- Personal Development Planning (PDP) for all awards.

18. Admissions Criteria

A. Academic Admissions Criteria

A first degree or equivalent in a related field of study, and/or experience in language related fields. IELTS 6.5 or equivalent for non-native speakers of English

B. Disability

The University makes no distinction in its admissions policy with regard to disability and will endeavour to make all reasonable adjustments in order to make it possible for students to study at Portsmouth on a course of their choice.

19. Evaluation and Enhancement of Standards and Quality in Learning and Teaching

A. Mechanisms for Review and Evaluation

- Course Leader's Annual Standards and Quality Evaluative Review.
- Head of Department's Annual Standards and Quality Evaluative Review.
- Unit and Course Level student feedback considered at Board of Studies.

- Unit Assessment Board consideration of student performance for each programme.
- Annual Standards and Quality Reports to Board of Studies, including consideration of Subject and Award External Examiner Reports.
- Periodic Programme Review.
- Student Representatives and Student/Staff Consultative Committees.
- Staff Performance and Development Review.
- Peer Review and Development Framework.
- Faculty Learning and Teaching Committee.

B. Responsibilities for Monitoring and Evaluation

- Unit Co-ordinators for unit content and delivery.
- Course Leader for day-to-day running of course.
- Board of Studies with overall responsibilities for operation and content of course.
- Head of Department.
- Associate Dean (Academic).
- Associate Dean (Students).
- Quality Assurance Committee.
- Unit, Award and Progression Board of Examiners.

C. Mechanisms for Gaining Student Feedback

- Student Representation on Board of Studies.
- Student Staff Consultative Committees.
- Unit and Course level student feedback questionnaires.
- University participates in external student surveys, e.g. National Student Survey (NSS), Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES) and International Student Barometer (ISB).

D. Staff Development Priorities

- Academic staff undertake activities related to research, scholarship, teaching and learning and student support and guidance.
- Annual staff performance and development reviews match development to needs.
- Managers undertake a variety of management development programmes.
- Academic staff undertake initial and continuing professional development within the Academic Professional Excellence Framework (APEX) programme which is aligned with the Higher Education Academy (HEA)'s UK Professional Standards Framework (UKPSF)
- All academic staff encouraged to seek Higher Education Academy membership.
- Support Staff are encouraged to attend short courses in areas such as minute taking, and specific IT packages.

20. Assessment Strategy

Units include a wider range of innovative coursework assignments, formative and summative, including the analysis and evaluation of work-related contexts. At this level, assessments are designed to encourage students to draw on a wide range of information sources and to develop an evaluative and critical approach to materials. Formative assessments include both group discussions and individual feedback on plans and drafts. This will allow students to reach their full potential when they submit their final assignments.

All students undertake a dissertation which requires independent research study and management, supported by a tutor. This will include the production of a brief research proposal.

21. Assessment Regulations

Standard university rules apply (see [Assessment and Regulations](#)).

22. Role of Externals

Subject External Examiners who will:

- oversee unit assessment and usually attend Unit Assessment Boards;
- approve unit assessment strategy;
- sample assessment artefacts;
- present report to Unit Assessment Boards.

Award External Examiners (usually also a Subject External Examiner) who will:

- oversee and attend Award/Progression Boards;
- scrutinise and endorse the outcomes of assessment;
- ensure that the standard of the award is maintained at a level comparable with that of similar awards elsewhere in the United Kingdom.

23. Indicators of Standards and Quality

A. Professional Accreditation/Recognition

B. Periodic Programme Review (or equivalent)

This programme underwent External Periodic Review in February 2014. The Review confirmed the 'fitness of purpose' of the curriculum and the effectiveness of its annual monitoring and review processes.

C. Quality Assurance Agency

QAA Higher Education Review, March 2015, judgements about standards and quality meet UK expectations (*for full report see [Higher Education Review of the University of Portsmouth, March 2015\[1\]](#)*).

[1] www.qaa.ac.uk/en/ReviewsAndReports/Documents/University%20of%20Portsmouth/University-of-Portsmouth-HER-15.pdf

D. Others

None.

24. Other Sources of Information

Other sources of information may be found in

- Course Approval Document.
- Student Handbook.
- University of Portsmouth Curricula Framework.
- Assessment Regulations
- University of Portsmouth (<http://www.port.ac.uk/>) and (<http://www.port.ac.uk/slas>).