



# **Subject Benchmark Statement**

**Classics and Ancient History (including  
Byzantine Studies and Modern Greek)**

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**SOS!UK**

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## About this Statement

This document is a QAA Subject Benchmark Statement for Classics and Ancient History (including Byzantine Studies and Modern Greek) 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 also describe the nature and characteristics of awards in a particular subject or area. Subject Benchmark Statements are published in QAA's capacity as a membership organisation 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
  - education for sustainable development
  - employability, entrepreneurship and enterprise education
- a comprehensive review updating the context and purposes of Classics and Ancient History (including Byzantine Studies and Modern Greek), including course design and content in order to inform and underpin the revised benchmark standards
- an acknowledgement of recent developments towards the co-existence of different educational and assessment modes - for example, both online and in person
- a reflection of changes in the interpretation of the meaning of key terms to define the subject area
- more emphasis on a variety of pathways towards greater inclusiveness in the discipline

## How can I use this document?

Subject Benchmark Statements are often used by higher education providers in the design and development of new courses in the relevant subject, as they provide a framework for specifying intended learning outcomes in an academic or vocational discipline. They are also used as a reference point when reviewing or revalidating degree courses. They may be used by external examiners in considering whether the design of a course and the threshold standards of achievement are comparable with other higher education providers. They also

provide professional, statutory and regulatory bodies (PSRBs) with the academic standards expected of students.

Subject Benchmark Statements provide general guidance for understanding the learning outcomes associated with a course 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 course design within a framework agreed by the subject community.

You may want to read this document if you are:

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

## Relationship to legislation and regulation

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, as appropriate, for academic standards in Wales under [Quality Assessment Framework for Wales](#) and in Scotland as part of the [Quality Enhancement Framework](#). Subject Benchmark Statements are part of the current quality requirements in Northern Ireland. 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](#) 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 a Classics and Ancient History (including Byzantine Studies and Modern Greek) degree

1.1 This Subject Benchmark Statement refers to bachelor's degrees with honours (including the MA (Hons) in Scotland) in Classics and Ancient History (including Byzantine Studies and Modern Greek). In line with contemporary discussions on the nature and coverage of the subject area, it is conceived of here in broad and inclusive terms. 'Classics and Ancient History', 'Byzantine Studies' and 'Modern Greek' conventionally refer to the study of, respectively, ancient Greece and Rome from the late Bronze Age to Late Antiquity, late antique and medieval Byzantium/Constantinople between its re-founding by Constantine in 324 CE and its conquest by the Turks in 1453 CE, and the Greek-speaking world (including the Greek diaspora) from the late medieval period onwards. In view of this range, the subject area is truly interdisciplinary; thus, the material can be discovered through art, archaeology, history, language and linguistics, literature, philology, philosophy, law, science and medicine, environmental datasets (specifically paleoenvironmental evidence), and reception. Taken as a whole, the subject area embraces an increasing geographical and chronological scope, so that students can encounter ancient cultures and social groups beyond the traditional ones (for example, cultures from North Africa, Ancient Near/Middle East, Egypt, India, Iran, Scandinavia or China and social groups including women, children, slaves or freedmen) as well as the diverse, influential and complex reception of the classical, late antique and Byzantine worlds in all periods, forms and parts of the world. This study is supported by long-standing approaches as well as cutting-edge theoretical, practical and creative methodologies (not least in the Digital Humanities).

1.2 Within this broad subject area, degree courses may focus on different aspects, periods or approaches, either as stand-alone courses or as a part of broader interdisciplinary courses (for example, Liberal Arts). These different courses may be thought of as different intellectual pathways into the 'classical', each with a distinctive emphasis, but united by a focus on the classical past and the promotion of the value of its study.

1.3 In specifying benchmark information for this subject area, the following principles have been followed:

- benchmark information is expressed at a level of generality applicable to all the courses - whether for single or for joint/combined honours – that fall within the subject area, not separately for specific types of courses
- benchmark information is sufficiently flexible to accommodate the need for courses within the subject area to respond to developments in research and scholarship, in student background (including general education examination qualifications and subsequent experience), staff and student accessibility requirements, staff and student interest and demand, educational method and technology
- the range, complexity and diversity of the subject area make it appropriate that a wide range of diversity, both within a single higher education provider and across different providers, is exhibited.

1.4 The classical world has had a huge influence on the modern, one that has been as important as it has been complex and multifaceted and therefore requires critical reflection in its own right. Engagement with the classical world has shaped not just those cultures that have directly inherited 'classical lands', but a much broader region, and it has been relevant for the development of religions such as Christianity, Judaism and Islam as well as many later cultures and societies. Elements of the classical world have been studied continuously in Western Europe, particularly since the Renaissance, and are now the subject of learning, teaching and research throughout the world. Indeed, the classical world has done much to shape modern conceptions of what an educational system should be, and it constitutes the original paradigm of non-vocational training, to the extent that modern society's expectations of the general attributes of an honours graduate reflect those long associated with the notion of classical education. The works of ancient thinkers and artists have had and continue to have a major impact on developments in areas such as architecture, art, ethics, literature, politics and social thought. The classical world and its adaptations frequently underlie modern notions of civilisation, gender and race. However, these notions built off of the traditional classical world are sometimes used to compare to other cultures or non-traditional classical cultures in negative, racist, and Eurocentric ways. Thus, the study of this subject area contributes significantly to understanding aspects of the origins of modern culture, enabling students to engage critically with the classical world and its impact as well as appreciating the differences between traditional and non-traditional classical cultures with a level of respect.



## Purposes of a Classics and Ancient History (including Byzantine and Modern Greek) degree

1.5 The purposes of the study of Classics and Ancient History (including Byzantine Studies and Modern Greek) include general benefits of engaging with a subject in the humanities and, since the subject straddles the two fields, the benefits of engaging with a subject in the social sciences. For it is a fundamental assumption of a liberal approach to education that art, architecture, archaeology, other elements of material culture, history, language, literature, inscriptions and other written resources, philology and philosophy are worthwhile and compelling subjects of study and understanding in and for themselves. Accordingly, many honours degree courses in the arts and humanities have as their principal aim the goal of enabling students to attain such understanding, to appreciate the values of its objects, to learn to think critically about themselves and others, to critically evaluate evidence and formulate arguments, to think in long time scales (for example about how societies change over centuries) and to enjoy the life of the mind. For this reason, honours degree courses in this subject area make a substantial contribution to fostering students' personal development, and thus to the enhancement of their quality of life, and to the creation of a society of engaged, critical, respectful and responsible citizens.

1.6 More specifically, although the subject matter of Classics and Ancient History (including Byzantine Studies and Modern Greek) is arranged around the ancient world, this subject area has always been focused on providing the broadest possible platform of transferable skills for both further academic study and rigorous intellectual training outside the academic. Many modern disciplines, including philosophy, theology, politics, foreign languages and literature in non-classical languages, are effectively approached from the study of their ancient counterparts. Generally, engagement with ancient culture provides exposure to many fundamental questions of life still relevant today and creates a basis for approaching questions of the contemporary world.

## Opportunities

1.7 Given the extraordinary scope of the subject area, the impact of its study on the student of Classics and Ancient History (including Byzantine Studies and Modern Greek) is similarly broad in scope. The opportunities it offers may include the study of one or more of the following aspects.

**1.8 History:** to understand the nature of a diverse range of ancient and modern societies, cultures and political systems, how they developed, and the historical reasons for their development and impact in turn on other cultures; and to reckon with their legacy in more recent societies, cultures and political systems. Such study promotes:

- skills in sifting and comparing different accounts, in evaluating and interpreting specific ancient testimony **from an unbiased view and through the lens of the period it was formulated** and in employing a range of historical methodologies
- an understanding of how such material can be used in combination with other types of evidence
- a sensitivity to the range of cultural similarities and differences that is of particular importance and value in modern multicultural societies
- an understanding of the 'use' and 'abuse' of ideas of the classical world in contemporary discussions.

**1.9 Language and linguistics:** to develop a command of one or more out of a range of rich and complex languages (often Latin and/or Greek (ancient or modern) **as well as, for example, Akkadian, Ancient Egyptian, Arabic, Coptic, Hebrew**). These languages:

- make searching demands and require subject-specific intellectual processes
- enable the development of a grasp of the basic grammatical structure of both Indo-European and non-Indo-European languages, and in particular the nature of the English language, and foster skills applicable to other languages and to communication in general
- demonstrate the basic principles of linguistic developments
- despite similarities of origin and structure yield very different expressive resources
- offer opportunities to unlock meaning in literary, epigraphic and other texts.

**1.10 Literature:** to study in depth a varied body of literature that is in continuous dialogue with itself and offers some of the most influential examples of, for example, epic, drama, oratory, historiography and love poetry in world literature. The study of such literature:

- presents models of expression that feed into the acquisition of persuasive written and oral skills, and develops a sense of the uses and especially the manipulation of language
- offers the chance to develop skills in interpreting fragmentary texts (in particular via epigraphy and papyrology) and in approaching problems of textual transmission and palaeography
- provides insight into when (situational), how, and by whom written and oral language were used in classical cultures, assisting the audience to recognise the perspectives and biases of the writers and ancient audiences of such material
- promotes an understanding of how such material can be used in combination with other types of evidence.

**1.11 Philosophy:** to explore philosophical issues in their pioneering presentation by diverse thinkers, from a range of cultures, with very different cultural and linguistic assumptions from modern ones, to engage with the arguments and analyses they put forward and to register the perennial importance for philosophy of their questions, methods and teachings (including ancient science). Thus, philosophy:

- teaches logical thinking
- exposes students to some of the most important moral, ethical and existential issues that continue to exercise humanity as well as to a diverse range of possible responses to and dialogues about them
- facilitates students to consider their own stance and beliefs regarding such issues in an informed, open and unbiased setting
- promotes an understanding of how such material can be used in combination with other types of evidence.

**1.12 Art and archaeology:** to study in depth a varied body of art and architecture and other material culture, which is in continuous dialogue with itself and with world art and architecture, and that offers some of the most influential examples in this field. Such study enables students to:

- become familiar with a range of forms of material evidence for ancient civilisations and their ecologies
- begin to understand and contribute new knowledge on non-elite or non-traditional members of ancient societies who are not usually represented through literary texts but are able to self-represent through material evidence

- become familiar with environmental archaeology techniques and evidence to collect environmental data and understand environmental conditions and past human-environment interactions
- potentially experience field work or the study of objects in situ or in museums
- develop observational and interpretative skills with respect to material objects
- achieve an understanding of how such material can be used in combination with other types of evidence
- become aware of the contribution new discoveries make to the evolutionary nature of studies in the subject area
- understand basic principles of architectural construction and reconstruction
- comprehend the expression of ideas in visual form and the various artistic and material choices made at different times and in different contexts.

1.13 These opportunities are designed to produce honours graduates who have some or all of the following characteristics. The list is not exhaustive, nor does every course within the subject area necessarily include everything:

## Subject-specific abilities, skills and forms of knowledge

- an understanding of another culture with the recognition that cultures are complex and likely not fully represented by our primary datasets which are diverse and fragmentary, whether focused on its literature, thought and religion, its history and political, social and economic organisation, how it values, approaches and interacts with nature, or its art and material culture; demonstration of a critical engagement with this culture and how it responded to inequality; and development of an informed sense of the similarities and differences between it and modern cultures
- a broad knowledge, developed within a coherent framework, of complementary subjects and comparative approaches, drawn from such fields as language, literature, linguistics, philosophy, history, art and archaeology or theme-based topics that cross the boundaries between them (such as the environment, gender, race, religion or social structures) and between periods
- knowledge and familiarity with an appropriate and diverse range of primary materials, the vast majority of which are fragmentary, such as literary, historical and philosophical texts, art objects, archaeological

evidence, inscriptions, papyri and others; the ability to understand the gaps in primary evidence and hypothesise what may fill them

- command of a range of techniques and methodologies, including some or all of the following: bibliographical, archival and library research skills, skills in reading and textual analysis, a range of historical methodologies including skills in analysing statements and making use of fragmentary evidence, digital humanities expertise (including the capacity to use databases and electronic resources), visual skills characteristic of art criticism, the use of statistics, philosophical argument and analysis, and an analytical grasp of language, skills in translation from and/or into ancient and modern languages
- an understanding of a range of viewpoints on problems of interpretation and evaluation, and an ability to adopt a variety of critical approaches to them drawn from across the subject area
- a level of intellectual independence necessary to research classical subjects, to formulate clear arguments based on classical subject matter and to present the results clearly, both orally and in writing
- an analytical knowledge and ability to understand, read, write (and possibly speak and hear) one or more ancient and modern languages, encompassing a thorough knowledge of grammatical structures, a broad vocabulary and range of appropriate idioms, a sensitive knowledge of register and translation skills.

## General abilities, transferable skills and qualities of mind

1.14 Pre-eminent cognitive attributes fostered by study in the subject area include:

- a significant degree of autonomy, manifested in self-direction and intellectual initiative, both in learning and study and in the management of the time devoted to them
- a capacity for critical reflection on the extent and limitations of how and what one has learned, discovered and understood
- capacity for critical judgement in the light of evidence and argument
- a capacity for creativity both in the development and in the communication of ideas and arguments
- an empathy with those in different circumstances from one's own, which can be gained by using antiquity and historical human-environment

relationships which are fundamentally different from the modern as lenses

- a deeper understanding of the complex history and continuing urgency of a range of current issues through historical perspective, including for instance changes in climate, colonialism or inequality within society
- an openness to interdisciplinarity, eclecticism and new methods.

1.15 These qualities of mind presuppose a number of more specific abilities, namely to:

- gather, commit to memory, organise and deploy evidence and information and to show awareness of the consequences of the unavailability of evidence
- extract key elements from complex information, and identify and solve associated problems
- select and apply appropriate methodologies in assessing the meaning and significance of information
- engage in analytical and evaluative thinking about texts, evidence, arguments, theories and interpretations, independently estimating their relevance to the issue in question, discriminating between opposing theories and forming judgements on the basis of evidence and argument
- critically evaluate the usefulness of and the influence of digital resources on the ancient world
- engage in lateral thinking, making creative connections between ideas and information in different fields of study
- marshal arguments lucidly, coherently and concisely in a way that is accessible to a range of target audiences, both orally and in writing
- display critical appreciation and judgement of literature and art as well as other written and material evidence.

1.16 Finally, there are a number of additional practical capacities, namely the ability to:

- orally present material in a clear and effective manner, using audio-visual aids when appropriate and relating it to the concerns of the audience, making reasonable adjustments as and when required
- present material in written form, with discrimination and lucidity in use of language, professional referencing and clear and effective layout, including, as appropriate, tabular, diagrammatic or photographic presentation

- work creatively and flexibly, both independently and also collaboratively with others
- organise one's own work, conduct independent study, write and think under pressure and meet deadlines
- make effective and appropriate use of digital resources and information technology at all stages of one's work. Generally, this includes the ability to collect and evaluate digitised data, to use electronic texts, databases and their associated software, to make effective use of virtual learning environments and other e-pedagogy, to organise and present arguments, text and images electronically, to make creative and critical use of electronic media in communicating one's work to others through a variety of formats and to employ appropriate safety and security protocols
- cope with central challenges of the modern period through the ability to read a wide range of source material critically and with due regard to provenance, and to interpret and synthesise source material while taking nothing for granted
- function in a range of vocational settings, via work placements with a range of stakeholder organisations (for example, charities, galleries, museums, archaeological companies, libraries, archives and schools) as part of the course.

1.17 Studying for a degree in Classics and Ancient History (including Byzantine Studies Modern Greek) demonstrates a willingness and ability to learn and to comprehend a breadth of challenging subject material. As a result, graduates of courses in this subject area are traditionally highly valued by employers for their broad skill sets, developed through working with an unusually wide range of topics, periods, places and source materials, which in turn require unusually high levels of intellectual flexibility. Linguistic aptitude, critical analysis, respect towards cultures different from one's own, high levels of creativity and skills in researching, organising and presenting material are useful in the widest range of employments.

1.18 There are certain types of employment that place special value on the subject-specific qualities listed above. These include (but are not limited to) the following:

- academic research, including positions with teaching and/or administrative responsibilities
- teaching at all levels from primary to higher education, including positions that involve research and/or administration



- museums, **libraries** and galleries, international, national and regional, both curatorial positions and those concerned with outreach and increasing public understanding of the past and of visual and material evidence
- heritage management, international, national and with local public authorities, and for charities and commercial companies, including designing and managing the visitor experience and/or the production of textual and digital materials
- **sustainable development focused fields or projects which require the ability to holistically comprehend complex systems, cause-and-effect cycles and change over time**
- **the creative economy, especially publishing and media, including, but not exclusively, editorial work, radio, television and film production, translation, exhibition and event management**
- **a range of governmental and commercial work from diplomacy to tourism, in which linguistic and cultural understanding and sensitivity are key attributes.**

1.19 In some cases, a master's level qualification (or above) is required to enter these professions.

## Characteristics of a Classics and Ancient History (including Byzantine Studies and Modern Greek) degree

1.20 Courses in Classics and Ancient History (including Byzantine Studies and Modern Greek) teach the ability to deal with evidence (material, written, digital) critically and involve the study of a wide range of sources and source types while the proportion of art, archaeology, history, language and linguistics, literature, philology, philosophy, law, science and medicine, and reception studied varies.

1.21 It is also important to recognise the interconnected nature of Greek and Roman societies with each other and with other cultures of the Mediterranean and beyond (for example, in North Africa, Ancient Near/Middle East, Egypt, India, Iran). Core to these subjects is the recognition and application of concepts of cultural influence, conflict, blending and borrowing.

## Equality, diversity and inclusion



1.22 Classics and its related disciplines have traditionally had a reputation for elitism and exclusivity that has been difficult to remove, despite much intensive activity in recent years to enable the participation of a broader and more diverse group of students and academics and to expand the critical framework and scope of the subject. The subject must **continue to** engage with and explain its history: a recognition of the historic connections (both positive and negative) between the subject of 'Classics' and imperialism, colonialism, white supremacy, class division, **socioeconomic disparity, heteronormativity and cisnormativity** is now an unavoidable aspect of the education provided by universities, whether formally as an assessed part of the curriculum or informally as a subject of discussion and comment.

1.23 Elitism may be foregrounded in what is taught and how it is taught. There is therefore important work to be done, or to be continued, to expose these subjects to a wider audience and to make them more inclusive through their teaching. This can be achieved by developing curriculum materials that encourage inclusive teaching throughout each degree course, for example by taking account of the needs of students who may not have had a chance to study the subject area before, **such as by providing pathways to learn to read Latin or Ancient Greek which is still a requirement for entry to some Classics degrees**, as well as by featuring material about different under-represented **and marginalised** groups as part of core teaching. Teaching can make it clear to students that subject methodologies involve seeing antiquity as a means by which one can explore issues of continuing resonance through historical perspective. Moreover, the ethical concerns that frame how one engages with these topics need to be addressed and acknowledged as well as intersectional issues that students may face (where their social, economic or political identities may lead to discrimination). These can potentially be addressed in relation to the material taught, especially if connections are made between antiquity and modernity.

1.24 The elitist perception of these subjects **should** also be reduced with, for example, the inclusion of the work of people from oppressed and marginalised groups on reading lists **and in course content; hiring, supporting and retaining teaching and other course staff from a range of marginalised backgrounds both to uplift them as individuals and demonstrate role models to all students;** teaching topics such as post-colonial and decolonising approaches; engaging these subjects with modern debates; demonstrating the perspective of groups dominated by empire; developing modules on disability, gender and sexuality, and/or appropriately embedding these topics in other modules; bringing out

racial, ethnic and other diversities in ancient material; and showing that these subjects are not always centred on Greece and Italy, but have a global reach in terms of empire (with all its implications) and interactions in the ancient world (for example, North Africa, Ancient Near/Middle East, Egypt, India, Iran) as well as their diverse modern receptions in a range of cultures and contexts.

1.25 In general, an inclusive environment for learning anticipates the varied requirements of learners and aims to ensure that all students have equal access to educational opportunities. Students should be offered learning opportunities that are equally accessible to all, by means of inclusive design wherever possible and by means of reasonable individual adjustments where necessary.

1.26 To encourage and attract students with an interest in Classics and Ancient History from all backgrounds, department teams should run outreach in schools and communities of all kinds. Entry requirements should also account for non-standard academic qualifications and professional or working experiences to ensure students from a wide range of life stages and educational backgrounds are able to join the course so long as they hold the prerequisite knowledge and skills for the course.

1.27 Recognising the historic heterogeneity of the discipline and historical injustice in access and in the nature of study, providers work to ensure that students from a wide range of social, racial and class backgrounds are supported to apply for Classics and Ancient History. Explicit support is given to students who have not had the opportunity to study an ancient language before, and qualifications, lived experience and interest are balanced with a student's context to ensure appropriate support is given to them to both apply and succeed in studying Classics.

1.28 Providers recognise that the study of Classics and Ancient History is enhanced by site visits, often outside of the UK to archaeological sites, and that students with limited mobility and physical disabilities alongside those with limited financial resources may struggle to access such visits, while students with visual disabilities may have difficulty engaging with material evidence. Providers should ensure that neither cost nor disability pose a substantive barrier to accessing these opportunities, and ensure resources are available to support students to access such opportunities where necessary. In addition, Providers recognise that some sites of importance are in countries and regions which discriminate against individuals based on certain characteristics such as gender, sexuality, ethnicity or

religion and make the safety of students their utmost priority when choosing and organising trips to such locations.

1.29 Recognising the diverse array of students who may come to a Classics and Ancient History (including Byzantine Studies and Modern Greek) degree, providers ensure that they create an inclusive learning environment that supports those with Specific Learning Difficulties and neurodivergence to prosper and succeed in courses. Providers support students with access plans where necessary and deploy a wide range of teaching methods and assessment techniques to accommodate students' needs.

## Sustainability

1.30 The contemporary study of Classics and Ancient History (and Byzantine Studies and Modern Greek) presents significant opportunities for education on issues of sustainability. Moreover, in the discipline there is a recognition that academic studies do not exist in isolation from the world in which people live: the immediate context and the issues that face contemporary society shape the way in which the curriculum is approached. Many modern values relevant in discussions on sustainability can fruitfully be problematised or put into perspective through dialogue with the ancient world, for instance values of consumerism or materialism, the virtue of economic growth (and the imperative on government to sustain it), secularism, liberalism, fundamentalism. In addition, various approaches, such as eco-criticism, **historical ecology**, **studies of human-environment interactions**, post-humanism and the Anthropocene, or different attitudes to the natural world in antiquity, as they emerge from literary and material remains, are currently debated in scholarship and influence teaching.

1.31 Basic principles underpinning the subject area's engagement with sustainability include:

- education for sustainable development (ESD) 'is not solely about environmental issues as is commonly misconstrued, but focuses on the connections between economic, social and environmental factors' ([Education for Sustainable Development Guidance](#)), linked to the [UN's sustainable development goals](#)
- technical and scientific skills cannot on their own provide solutions to the environmental, political and social problems facing the world; the whole range of human endeavour are needed to tackle these

- cross-cultural, inter- and multi-disciplinary understanding and collaboration are essential to the development of truly just and sustainable solutions
- environmental approaches in Classics recognise that both ecological systems and cultural systems are complex and analyses them in tandem
- any tertiary education **alone** is unlikely to give direct access to a toolkit that will solve the problems of the present and future; at best, education (particularly at undergraduate level) will develop skills of analysis and habits of thought that may be applied in novel and creative ways.

1.32 Although only a proportion of the UN's sustainable development goals seem directly relevant to the ancient world, the evidence from ancient societies provides particularly rich source material to reflect on many of these goals, **as well as issues of governments' oversight of the environment**, in particular (5) gender equality; (6) **clean water and sanitation**; (10) reduced inequalities; (11) sustainable cities and communities; and (16) peace, justice and strong institutions. More important than content-specific contributions are the competencies that education in the subject area builds.

1.33 The UNESCO global framework, [Education for Sustainable Development: Towards Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals](#), provides a summary of eight key competencies for sustainability against which outcomes and skills developed in Classics and Ancient History (including Byzantine Studies and Modern Greek) can be mapped. Particular strengths of the subject area are the following ones:

- Systems thinking competency: much of what is studied is the interaction of groups of people, at their best and at their worst. This has the capacity to build understanding of the complexity of interaction between different peoples and cultures, seen in a wide variety of evidence. Some of this might be directly relevant to modern problems: for instance, looking at patterns of migration and issues of population displacement; or agricultural, economic and climate-based system change and collapse over time; but much of it will be using ancient material to build relevant skills.
- Critical thinking competency: examining the otherness of the ancient world as well as its connectedness to our own encourages students to **conduct** reflective and critical examination of embedded biases. Looking at the world through another culture's eyes should make everyone conscious of the contingency of what one thinks are the natural or

- obvious ways of seeing the world. This is also linked to the self-awareness and normative competencies described by UNESCO as 'ways of being'.
- Collaboration competency: the **necessary** interdisciplinary nature of the study of the ancient world prepares students naturally for appreciating differing perspectives; and the meta-debates about the value and position of these subjects as disciplines within the academy make students particularly suspicious of overarching simplistic or univocalic narratives. Where groupwork and collaborative project-based learning are part of an institution's teaching and learning, this competency will be accordingly strengthened.
  - Integrated problem-solving competency: again, the wide variety of approaches contained within the subject area means that students are used to switching between different kinds of analysis and problem-solving techniques. Historical, linguistic, literary and philosophical approaches are all markedly different and contain in themselves a plethora of both complementary and mutually contradictory ways of approaching questions, and the intellectual flexibility to understand, appreciate and utilise a number of these is integral to the subject area.

**1.34** Given the way in which contemporary issues such as gender inequality, socioeconomic disparity, consumerism, over-exploitation of resources and the role of economic growth can be problematised through the study of Classics and Ancient History, providers should work to ensure that carefully parallels to present societal issues and interdisciplinary thought are drawn throughout a degree and that the differences are brought into sharp relief. Providers should further consider how insight from the classical world, for instance the management of scarce resources (particularly the role of state level systems) and the societal relationship with nature and land, can be used to enhance modern understanding of issues facing humanity.

**1.35** Providers should also consider their own sustainability in delivering courses in Classics and Ancient History. Institutions can transition to fully renewable energy sources, reduce energy and resource consumption where possible, minimise the environmental impact of travel associated with study of the degree and provide appropriate infrastructure and advice for following sustainable waste management and protecting the local natural environment. Departmental staff should demonstrate sustainable practice while teaching both in respect to Classics and Ancient History specifically and regular daily activities including using sustainable practice when storing artefacts, continuing to

incorporate recent developments in sustainable practise and teaching for Classics and Ancient History, managing teaching and personal resource use and waste management and utilising green technology to further encourage and instil these practices in students.

## Entrepreneurship and enterprise education

1.36 Traditionally, the subject area of Classics and Ancient History (including Byzantine Studies and Modern Greek) has not always engaged actively with entrepreneurship and enterprise education, but these aspects have been present indirectly due to the subject area's potential to address key issues of this debate. Consequently, more recently, employability, including entrepreneurship, has become more prominent as an important element in courses in Classics and Ancient History (including Byzantine Studies and Modern Greek). Some institutions run specific modules or volunteering or work experience schemes to enhance graduates' employability, and all provide advice by means of a dedicated careers service.

1.37 More specifically, all courses in Classics and Ancient History (including Byzantine Studies and Modern Greek) teach transferable skills essential to an entrepreneurial career. The diverse nature of the subject matter, the wealth of methodological approaches needed to deal with written and material resources, the need to understand other cultures and to engage with foreign languages make graduates in this subject area naturally curious and open-minded. The questions to be asked of the material encourage students to identify and resolve problems and to engage in creative thinking. All these attributes have been identified as key characteristics of successful entrepreneurs. **The issues raised by the ancient sources require students and teachers to think about key questions of human behaviour, to consider the modern situation as well as possible developments for the future.** Research tasks and project-based assessment are opportunities for students to learn how to devise independent projects, how to manage them in order to complete them on time and to a good standard, to try out something innovative, to engage with others where appropriate and to reflect on the process. Thus, while Classics and Ancient History (including Byzantine Studies and Modern Greek) typically does not have any enterprise education specifically labelled as such, entrepreneurship and enterprise are integral parts of the curriculum; the subject area, therefore, contributes to providing the next generation with the key skills for a successful entrepreneurial career.



## 2 Distinctive features of a Classics and Ancient History (including Byzantine Studies and Modern Greek) degree

### Design

2.1 The breadth of the subject area and its interdisciplinary nature are reflected in the course design. Courses are structured to ensure that, within the full-time span of a given course, every student follows a balanced and complementary range of modules. Within these structures students are encouraged to show intellectual ambition and find their own pathways in each year of study. This individual development is supported by research skills training, a coherent set of core modules and, so far as resources permit, the provision of research-informed optional modules. As a key feature of courses, students are introduced from the outset to diverse scholarly and other perspectives on antiquity. In addition to language-based courses requiring the study of ancient Greek and Latin, most courses in Classics and Ancient History (including Byzantine Studies and Modern Greek) include opportunities to learn these and other ancient languages and to apply this learning. Courses generally allow a choice of assessment modes and **may include opportunities for students to co-design assessment**; they are considerate of any student-specific reasonable adjustments.

### Accessibility

2.2 Classics and Ancient History (including Byzantine Studies and Modern Greek) are increasingly accessible to students with diverse educational backgrounds. It is recognised that, before starting university, students may not necessarily have encountered their chosen subject through formal education but rather through the presence of the subject in the arts, media and popular culture. There is also an awareness of changed cultures of access: students may have become engaged with the ancient world via online and digital platforms rather than in libraries or museums. Courses aim to build on what students already know and appreciate, but also challenge students, encouraging them to question their assumptions and to engage critically with resources regardless of format.

2.3 Providers should seek to ensure that their courses are well curated in that they include clearly communicated learning opportunities, assessments that are

appropriately spaced and particular support when concepts and skills are initially introduced. Well-curated courses benefit all students by promoting good mental health and well-being and reduce the administrative burden and cognitive load on disabled students which is already extremely high due to the complex and demanding nature of the course and additional processes they may go through to ensure their education is fully accessible.

2.4 Traditional learning environments, teaching activities and assessments are not equally accessible to all students and Providers and course teams should implement practices to mitigate this and ensure equitable access to high quality education for all. The combined use of digital/virtual, face-to-face, synchronous and asynchronous teaching can significantly increase accessibility of teaching and learning for students with caring and working commitments, disabilities and health conditions who may not be able to attend all teaching time in person.

2.5 Accessibility should be embedded into assessment design, considering and pre-empting the needs of disabled students, neurodivergent students and those with special educational needs. Where an individual student's needs are still not met by this design, reasonable adjustments should be discussed with the student and implemented.

2.6 Teaching, learning and assessment environments should also be made accessible to all students (and presenting spaces to all attendees). For example, associated enabling technology is required during teaching to capture the live display of extended written material and ensure accurate captions. Within a physical venue, consideration of space for mobility aids including wheelchairs and crutches, support workers, the visibility of boards and other display equipment and audibility of session leaders and presentation material is essential.

## Progression

2.7 Courses facilitate progression irrespective of the individual starting points of students. Courses are structured on the intellectual distance that each student needs to travel from their knowledge and abilities at entry to attainment of the attributes of an honours graduate. All students acquire knowledge through their studies, but individual pathways of learning determine different end points in the knowledge and skills acquired. Material essential for the award is covered in a sequence of core modules; these can then be supplemented by optional modules through which students are able to follow and develop their own interests within the various sub-disciplines of the subject, in line with institutional requirements.



Where resources allow, multiple levels of language courses are offered to match prior experience and different rates of progression. The skills students develop also vary. This applies as much to generic abilities, such as writing skills and time management, as to subject-specific skills, such as translating Latin or interpreting the source material of ancient history. Courses and modules provide appropriate skills training as well as teaching and tutoring methods to help students at each stage to achieve a realistic appreciation of their skills levels and areas for further development. The provision of peer mentoring and group-study schemes allows spaces for students to learn from one another; care should be taken that student-led groups are inclusive.

2.8 Honours courses typically offer opportunities to engage in independent research and learning. During their course of study students progressively develop skills of research and inquiry, which in many cases culminates in the capstone exercise of an extended project or dissertation in the final year, supported by supervision. Students often have the chance to choose their own topics for these dissertations and also other coursework, and are guided to formulate research questions. The breadth of subject matter and the rich variety of theoretical approaches in the subject area of Classics and Ancient History (including Byzantine Studies and Modern Greek) mean that there is scope for students, even towards the end of their studies, to acquire knowledge, skills and abilities in fields they have so far not explored.

2.9 Over the course of a degree with honours (FHEQ Level 6; FQHEIS Level 10) a student in Classics and Ancient History (including Byzantine Studies and Modern Greek) will progress from one year of study to the next, in line with the regulations and processes for each institution. However, it is expected that each year would see the attainment of certain levels of knowledge, expertise and experience that build towards the final achievement of meeting the threshold-level subject-specific and generic skills listed. Upon graduation from an undergraduate degree, it would be expected that a student would be capable of, and equipped for, undertaking postgraduate study in classics, ancient history or an associated discipline.

2.10 Joint honours undergraduates will achieve core elements of the specific and generic skills for the subject, and will add others according to the subjects covered in joint courses. Additionally, they may explore the overlap between their two subject areas, creating further opportunities for interdisciplinary study.

2.11 In a standard three-year undergraduate honours degree course students may exit earlier and may then be eligible for a Certificate of Higher Education, a Diploma of Higher Education or an honours degree depending upon the years of study completed to a satisfactory standard. Scottish bachelor's degrees with honours are typically designed to include four years of study, which relates to the structure of Scottish primary and secondary education.

## Flexibility

2.12 Typically, courses in Classics and Ancient History (including Byzantine Studies and Modern Greek) are flexible in providing choice on entry to allow for diversity in terms of students' educational backgrounds – for example, by offering ancient language classes for students with some or no previous training and classes in other sub-disciplines (history, archaeology, literature) that allow students to employ their existing transferable academic skills to new areas and to discover new interests and talents. Many courses include 'low-risk' options for students to try areas of learning (languages, philosophy, art, for example) with limited or no detriment to their progression as a whole. Most such courses provide pathways within the wider subject area that permit students to focus to a greater or lesser extent on one or more of its sub-disciplines. This is also advantageous in terms of accessibility to Classics and Ancient History courses for non-traditional students, for example, mature and part-time learners, who may have had even less exposure (or no recent exposure) to the study of the ancient world.

2.13 Courses in Classics and Ancient History (including Byzantine Studies and Modern Greek) are also flexible in terms of their delivery and the range of teaching methods and materials that can be employed. The availability of digital resources, including primary texts in ancient languages, translated versions of primary evidence, visual material and archaeological data, alongside printed materials, means that such courses can be (and have been) taught successfully at just about any point on the spectrum of blended learning, from entirely in person to entirely distanced and online. This flexibility has advantages in terms of inclusivity, making resources and teaching more accessible and usable in general, and especially to students with certain disabilities and/or whose circumstances make it difficult to adhere to traditional university timetables.

## Partnership

2.14 The subject area of Classics and Ancient History (including Byzantine Studies and Modern Greek) acknowledges that degrees exist in wider intellectual, cultural and economic contexts and that partnerships are valuable both in developing the subject area and the lives of students, teachers and researchers. While there is no close link between classics and ancient history curricula and a subject association in the way that there is for some other subjects, many departments and students benefit from engagement with the Classical Association or Classics for All, which serve to link them with schools and the needs of younger learners. The British School at Athens and the British School at Rome not only connect some university teachers of these subjects as researchers, but also offer opportunities for some students to study the material remains of Greek and Roman antiquity in Greece and Rome, particularly through their long-standing summer schools in archaeology and topography. The Societies for the Promotion of Hellenic/Roman Studies provide library resources, organise internship opportunities and offer prizes, grants and awards for student projects.

2.15 Graduates in Classics and Ancient History (including Byzantine Studies and Modern Greek) develop a wide variety of transferable skills and consequently are employed in many diverse fields. However, partnerships with schools and other pre-tertiary educational establishments remain important both as a destination for some graduates as teachers of classics and related subjects and to support interest in these subjects among potential students and a wider public. Consequently, many departments engage in schools outreach programmes, and some arrange school teaching placements for students. Museums as well as heritage and archaeology organisations provide another field of employment that has direct connections with the content of Classics and Ancient History degrees, and some departments have partnerships with museums and heritage organisations that enable students to gain appropriate work experience in those areas. Some institutions have created links with digital humanities departments and organisations, where students can enhance their knowledge on, for example, digital editions, electronic archives and 3D modelling.

2.16 Classics and Ancient History departments should choose partners who share and demonstrate their values and equality, diversity, inclusion, accessibility and sustainability to ensure all students on the course who engage with these partners have equitable access to real world education and work experience which will prepare them for working and practicing sustainably after graduating.

## Monitoring and review

2.17 Degree-awarding bodies routinely collect and analyse information and undertake periodic course reviews according to their own needs. They will draw on a range of external reference points to ensure that their provision aligns with sector norms, **needs and future concerns**. Monitoring and evaluation consists of periodic assessments 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.

2.18 Externality is an essential component of the quality assurance system in the UK. Higher education 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.

2.19 External examination 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 to students, the outcomes of a cohort and how these compare to similar provision offered within the UK. External examiners 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.

2.20 **Students should be embraced as partners within their own courses and ensuring the course acknowledges their diverse needs and perspectives should play a significant role in course review. Students are able to provide guidance, feedback and support for their own learning in several ways; this can be through departmental representatives or student surveys such as the National Student Survey (NSS) or SDG and sustainability curriculum mapping. Furthermore, students can feed into and collaborate with their students' union to discuss current trends in the student experience. Involving students in quality review processes can foster a sense of ownership and accountability, ensuring that the curriculum evolves to meet contemporary challenges, including those related to sustainability and equity. Students involved in quality review processes can be invaluable during the curriculum review and development of new courses where student steering groups may be established.**

2.21 This subject area is dynamic and changing; so, monitoring and review are crucial in maintaining currency in course design, delivery and content. Furthermore, these processes of review have particular value in ensuring not only compliance with changing legal requirements in areas such as equality, diversity and inclusivity, but also full engagement with those issues **and should therefore take extra care to seek out and recognise the voice of marginalised groups whose concerns may be overlooked among their respective stakeholder group.**

### 3 Content, structure and delivery

3.1 A description of the content typically covered in courses within the subject area will vary in practice to a greater or lesser extent from institution to institution, according to the disciplinary traditions that have developed over time and/or the specialisms of teaching staff at any given stage. Broadly speaking, the subject area embraces the linguistic, literary, cultural, historical and material records of the ancient Mediterranean world, centring on, but not limited to, the civilisations of Greece and Rome. Chronologically, it embraces a period conventionally reckoned as extending from the late Bronze Age to Late Antiquity.

3.2 'Byzantine Studies' is a branch of the subject area specifically concerned with the civilisation of late antique and medieval Byzantium/Constantinople between its re-founding by Constantine in 324 CE and its conquest by the Turks in 1453 CE, while 'Modern Greek' designates study of the Greek-speaking world (including the Greek diaspora) from the late medieval period onwards.

3.3 Courses in the subject area often include material that lies outside these limits, not least in respect of the reception of antiquity in different cultures and periods down to the present day. **It is desirable that students engaged in the study of the ancient world become cognisant also of how its study has changed over time as well as of how antiquity has been used, sometimes problematically, in later periods and places.**

3.4 Study within this subject area may involve encounters with sensitive or challenging topics (for example, slavery and violence against particular groups), which may be felt especially by students from marginalised identities with lived experience. Teaching should acknowledge and take into account the issues presented by these materials and the potential reactions of students.

3.5 Within the fields embraced by the subject area, the following are the principal honours degree courses available to students. In practice, these represent different strands within degree courses and individual students often combine elements from two or more in their studies, whether through joint degree courses such as Latin and Ancient History or Classical Archaeology and Ancient History or within broader degree courses such as liberal arts degrees.

3.6 **Classics** generally designates a course in which students are required to acquire and show proficiency in both the Ancient Greek and the Latin languages and may, at least at the beginning of their studies, make Greek and Latin literature their main, but not necessarily exclusive, focus.

3.7 **Ancient Greek** and **Latin** designate courses of the same general kind as classics, but concentrating on the language, literature and civilisation of ancient Greece and ancient Rome respectively, with occasional coverage of the medieval and later forms of both languages and their literatures.

3.8 Courses in **Classical Studies** (alternatively **Classical Civilisation**) are designed to offer students a broad understanding of the culture of Greco-Roman antiquity as a whole, in all its different aspects and their interrelations. Those entering Classical Studies courses are commonly given the option to learn Ancient Greek or Latin (or both) or to build on prior learning in these languages. Courses in Classical Studies often share elements with courses in Classics and/or Ancient History and Classical Archaeology.

3.9 Courses in **Ancient History** are generally concerned with the political, military, economic, social and cultural history of the Greco-Roman world in a broad sense, which may include the Ancient Near/Middle East or Ancient Egypt. They characteristically focus on major subperiods within the classical period and on the methodological problems involved in studying a historical culture, with a greater or lesser emphasis on the interpretation of a range of forms of material and textual evidence. Courses in Ancient History may, but do not necessarily, involve the study of Ancient Greek or Latin.

3.10 Courses in **Classical Archaeology** typically offer students engagement with a broad range of material culture, including, but not limited to, the art and architecture of the ancient Mediterranean world. Students taking courses of this kind acquire a range of skills from art criticism to the handling of different kinds of archaeological material, often including scientific and quantitative techniques as well as archaeological theory and method **including those pertaining to environmental archaeology**. Classical Archaeology is often combined with elements of Ancient History or general Archaeology courses.

3.11 Courses in **Late Antique** as well as in **Byzantine Studies** may pay special attention to the literature, theology or culture; or to the history, archaeology or art history of the late antique and Byzantine periods

3.12 Courses in **Modern Greek** require proficiency in the modern Greek language and take as their main concern the language, literature, thought and history of the Greek-speaking world since the later Middle Ages.

## Teaching and learning



## Starting point and end point

3.13 Arrangements for learning and teaching are based on the intellectual distance that each student needs to travel from their knowledge and abilities at entry to attainment of the attributes of an honours graduate. All students acquire knowledge during their studies, but the skills they develop vary; this applies as much to generic abilities such as time management and writing skills as it does to specific skills such as translating ancient languages or dealing with the complex source materials of the ancient historical or archaeological records. English comprehension and academic writing are easier for some students than for others; familiarity with digital media and IT varies greatly; **students will embark on their studies with differing levels of intellectual independence and critical maturity; accessibility needs will also vary.**

3.14 Higher education providers ensure suitable skills training, and teachers ensure that students have a realistic appreciation of their skills levels and needs, and the means to achieve what they need. Ideally, there will also be specific provision for different entry routes and levels of prior exposure to the subject. Ideally, too, group-teaching and group-studying within these pathways will allow students to learn from each other and, through the building of learning communities, to acquire the skills and abilities detailed in this Statement. **Explicit training in disciplinary conventions as well as raising awareness of issues of equality, diversity and inclusion are two key aspects of the transition support provided to students at the start of their course.**

## Independent learning and acquisition of core and transferable skills

3.15 The subject area of Classics and Ancient History (including Byzantine Studies and Modern Greek) is so broad in terms of subject matter and so rich in approaches involving new ways of thinking that it is appropriate for there to be scope for students, especially towards the end of their studies, both to specialise within the discipline and to devote a proportion of their module choices to the acquisition of knowledge, skills and abilities in fields they have not so far explored. **Space for low-risk experimentation is regularly built into the structure of the course, often at the start, allowing students to try new fields without detriment to their progression and eventual degree classification.**

## Modes of teaching and learning



3.16 In order to promote student engagement, it may be appropriate to modulate the mode of delivery, for example by pausing a recorded discussion, especially in encounters with challenging or sensitive material or in view of reasonable adjustments needed.

## Examples of different modes of teaching and learning

3.17 An honours graduate in the subject area will generally have had the opportunity to experience all or most of the following modes of teaching and learning:

- essay writing, traditionally conceived as the principal vehicle for the development of most of the abilities and forms of knowledge listed
- various forms of exercise designed to develop the linguistic, critical or problem-solving skills identified, such as:
  - source analysis
  - short critical commentaries ('gobbets')
  - 'practical' literary criticisms
  - prepared or unprepared translations from Greek (ancient or modern) and/or Latin
  - translation of words and phrases and sometimes longer texts into Greek (ancient or modern) and/or Latin
  - identification of and/or commentary upon art objects and other items of material culture
- recourse to a range of information technology (for example, through virtual learning environments) and provision for learning the skills of making use of digital resources appropriate to the subject area
- seminars or other forms of small-group discussion (in person or online), with or without individual or group presentations
- one-to-one interaction, between students and between students and teachers
- attending and engaging with formal lectures, both synchronous and asynchronous
- projects jointly undertaken with other students
- work-based learning by work placements, working on research projects and/or contributing to departmental activities
- reports on investigations, whether undertaken independently or in the context of group discussion

- analysis of audio and visual materials, including films and other digital media
- first-hand analysis of material culture in the field and/or in museums
- production of audio and visual presentations such as podcasts
- set-up of and contribution to online discussion platforms and blogs
- revision for formal examinations
- dissertations or projects, considered particularly valuable in encouraging self-direction and intellectual independence and initiative, as well as in requiring students to acquire research skills.

3.18 Mention may also be made of arrangements special to particular fields within the subject area:

- in Modern Greek, regular conversation practice in the language is indispensable for proper development of the ability to speak it, and a year abroad in Greece is highly desirable for those with no previous contact with the language. Modern Greek studies also use a range of audio and visual materials, including films and websites in modern Greek. **Sustainability of transport, accommodation and time length should be considered when planning time abroad.**
- in courses in Art and Archaeology, Ancient History, Late Antique and Byzantine studies direct contact with the material through, for example, study tours, museum visits, experience of field work, and the opportunity to handle artefacts is highly desirable. **The sustainability of any trips should again be considered and maximised, including by use of digital alternatives where appropriate.**

3.19 Some of the transferable skills specified may also be acquired or developed by extracurricular enhancement activities or through ancillary courses made available by higher education providers to students generally.

## Sub-disciplinary examples of teaching and learning towards core and transferable skills

### Example 1: language

3.20 Wherever possible, it is highly desirable that students who wish to do so are given opportunity and encouragement to acquire or improve linguistic skills in Greek (ancient, medieval or modern) and/or Latin (ancient, medieval or early modern) or in another language of the ancient Mediterranean at any stage in their

course of study for an honours degree. Differential access to the study of ancient languages before university, and diverse levels of attainment within different jurisdictions, requires the provision of different language pathways within degree courses and, where appropriate, may necessitate implementation of support to enable equivalent levels of attainment among students upon graduation irrespective of their prior linguistic training. The provision of such pathways also means that arrangements should be put in place so that students can access language modules also at a later point in their course. Experience of these languages at any stage in a course may significantly benefit command of other subject-specific abilities and forms of knowledge characteristic of honours graduates in the subject area as well as enhance development of more general abilities, such as the ability to systematise complex datasets or to analyse the logical structure of means of communication. Command of Greek and/or Latin is also an indispensable foundation for research degrees in many fields within the subject area and an invaluable asset for those entering master's degree courses.

## Example 2: classical or Byzantine art or field archaeology

3.21 A complementary range of skills may be acquired through training in classical or Byzantine art, field archaeology or the kind of artefact studies for which museological expertise is required. For many students there may have been the opportunity to begin study of such subjects at an early point in their honours degree course, with some going on to take more advanced and specialised options as they progress. In other courses this may not necessarily have been the case, and it may therefore be appropriate for students towards the end of their studies to be offered the opportunity to begin study of classical or Byzantine art or to gain experience of field archaeology. Where possible, opportunities to work in museums, galleries and in archaeological companies and units may be made available to students who might benefit from them, whether on an occasional basis or via internships or work experience during university vacations. Training involving direct engagement with landscapes and objects in a range of settings (such as critical walking, site surveys, general observation, drawing, creating video/audio recordings, writing descriptions) develops competencies that prepare students for work in many environments. For any such activities reasonable adjustments will be made.

## Assessment

### Wide variety of assessment methods

3.22 Given the breadth of the subject area and the differing degrees of specialisation possible within it, methods of assessment commonly associated with its courses will exhibit a similarly wide variety. It is for higher education providers to decide on the appropriate form of evidence they require in order to assess the level of student achievement in the subject area and to ensure that appropriate adjustments are in place to accommodate student-specific needs. Three principles generally inform the assessment process:

- the forms of evidence required relate primarily to the outcomes specified in this Statement and particularly to the study methods chosen as appropriate for the development of the attributes characteristic of an honours graduate in the subject area
- courses include elements of both formative and summative assessment, recognising the need to foster assessment literacy
- **assessment is designed with a view to inclusivity, giving students the opportunity to demonstrate skills and knowledge outcomes through a variety of assessment methods.**

## Assessment of general cognitive attributes: general remarks

3.23 Since students will be unable to display knowledge without also displaying some or all of the skills and abilities listed in paragraphs 1.13-1.15, they too can be directly or (as also, for example, in the case of research skills) indirectly assessed by the same forms of assessment. It is common practice in the subject area for students to be subject to both formative and summative assessment of their abilities to write essays and perform exercises that will test their linguistic, critical or problem-solving skills. Assessment criteria are often couched explicitly in terms of such skills and abilities. In Modern Greek, oral assessment of the ability to speak and understand the language is also universally practised. On the capacities and abilities tested by the preparation of joint projects, reports, and dissertations and projects, see below.

3.24 Assessments should enable students to demonstrate a range of attributes, including autonomy, critical reflection and critical judgement in particular.

## Assessment of practical abilities: general remarks

3.25 Practical skills and abilities (see paragraph 1.16) may be practised and tested for summative assessment, but will be particularly relevant in formative

assessment. If relevant, proficiency in a modern foreign language may be certificated on the basis of a separate assessment procedure, not related to the examination structures in place in the subject area. Evidence that an honours graduate in Classics and Ancient History (including Byzantine Studies and Modern Greek) has acquired **and can select and perform such skills and abilities while considering their sustainability** may also be supplied by such means as records of progress and achievement and be made available to potential employers through academic references where appropriate.

## Specific forms of summative assessment

3.26 Summative assessment takes different forms, all focused in the first instance on students' knowledge of the subject matter, such as:

- formal written 'unseen' examinations - require students to work and think under pressure and to show command of a certain aspect of the subject area
- in-class tests of language skills - useful for regular checks on progress and ensuring the command of linguistic patterns
- open-book and take-away written examinations - check some of the same abilities and skills as unseen examinations while they enable students to make more use of resources and research skills
- assessment by coursework and by submission of extended essays, dissertations and projects - require students to submit prepared work; test also the ability to meet deadlines; may enable students to make better display of a broad knowledge of subject matter and research skills than is possible in unseen timed examinations
- assessed presentations
- assessment of contributions to in-class or online written or oral discussions
- oral examinations - particularly appropriate for testing knowledge of primary materials such as art objects and the ability to understand and converse in a spoken foreign language
- **an opportunity to be assessed through creative response to the subject matter, in a variety of possible media and with an accompanying interpretative commentary or a reflective statement - recognises the creative endeavour entailed in academic study and has the scope to elicit a demonstration of skills and knowledge outcomes complementary to that achieved through more traditional modes of assessment.**

3.27 In general, the use of a variety of forms of summative assessment helps to exploit the strengths of each while counteracting the disadvantages to which each is prone. A range of assessments can also allow space to raise and develop awareness of different registers and provide opportunities for accented forms of expression (for example, through blogs or reflective journals). Offering students a choice of modes of assessment is a particularly effective way of attending to different styles of learning and overcoming potential barriers to success.

## 4 Benchmark standards

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 Classics and Ancient History (including Byzantine Studies and Modern Greek). Demonstrating these standards over time will show that a student has achieved the range of knowledge, understanding and skills expected of graduates in this subject. Graduates will have acquired most or a majority of the characteristic abilities and forms of knowledge, yet in different degrees and from different vantage points depending on differences in courses of study and the individual pathways students have taken as well as on personal circumstances and capacities.

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.

### Threshold level (3rd class)

4.3 Honours graduates of a threshold level of attainment (third class) will have demonstrated some degree of proficiency in the majority of the attributes listed in this Statement. Evidence of proficiency will have been provided if, for example, a graduate has, to some degree, demonstrated an ability to:

- understand key features of another culture and be sensitive to cultural difference
- demonstrate familiarity with a range of written and material sources, and an understanding of how they can be used in combination with other types of evidence
- understand a range of viewpoints on problems of interpretation and evaluation
- research topics, formulate arguments and present these both orally and in writing

- engage to a threshold level in observational, analytical and evaluative thinking about evidence, arguments and interpretations, forming judgements on the basis of evidence and argument
- present material in written form to a threshold standard, with consideration given to the effective use of language, referencing and layout
- work with relative independence and intellectual initiative, employing time-management skills to enable the timely completion of set tasks, and reflect on their progress
- work effectively with others to perform assigned tasks within **diverse** group settings
- demonstrate respect for others' views and the capacity to modify position when warranted
- make appropriate use of digital resources and information technology as a source of information, means of communication and aid to learning
- **demonstrate an appreciation for links between the study of the ancient world and modern societal issues, using interdisciplinary insight to apply knowledge of historical approaches and systems to issues including sustainability, resource exploitation, gender and racial inequality and socioeconomic disparities**
- **practice taught sustainability measures, minimising their impact and preserving the artefacts and sources they handle.**

## Typical level (2:1 or 2:2)

4.4 Honours graduates of a typical level of attainment (2:1 or 2:2) will have demonstrated a clear competence in most of the attributes listed in this Statement. Evidence of proficiency will have been provided if, for example, a graduate has demonstrated an ability to:

- **understand a range of features of another culture and be sensitive to cultural differences**
- demonstrate familiarity with a diverse set of written and material sources and a broad understanding of how they can be used in combination with other types of evidence
- understand a broad range of viewpoints on problems of interpretation and evaluation and adopt a variety of critical approaches to them
- research topics to a high standard, formulate solid arguments and present these lucidly both orally and in writing



- engage in observational, analytical and evaluative thinking about evidence, arguments and interpretations, forming sound judgements on the basis of evidence and argument
- present material in written form to a good standard, with discrimination and lucidity in use of language, professional referencing, and clear and effective layout
- extract key elements from complex information, and identify and solve associated problems using a range of methodologies
- work with a high degree of independence and intellectual initiative, employing effective time-management skills to enable the timely completion of set tasks, and reflect on their progress
- work creatively and flexibly with others to perform assigned tasks within **diverse** group settings
- **demonstrate respect for others' views and the capacity to reflect critically and modify position when warranted**
- make effective and appropriate use of digital resources and information technology as a source of information, means of communication and aid to learning
- **demonstrate an understanding of links between the study of the ancient world and modern societal issues, using interdisciplinary insight to apply knowledge of historical approaches and systems to issues including sustainability, resource exploitation, gender and racial inequality and socioeconomic disparities**
- **practice sustainability through their course, minimising their impact and preserving the artefacts and sources they handle.**

## Excellent level (1st class)

4.5 Honours graduates of an excellent level of attainment (first class) will have demonstrated a clear competence in the majority, if not all, of the attributes listed in this Statement. Evidence of proficiency will have been provided if, for example, a graduate has demonstrated an ability to:

- **understand a broad range of features of another culture and be sensitive to cultural difference**
- demonstrate familiarity with a wide and diverse set of written and material sources and a deep understanding of how they can be used in combination with other types of evidence

- understand a broad range of (sometimes complex) viewpoints on problems of interpretation and evaluation, and adopt a wide variety of critical approaches to them
- research topics to an excellent standard, formulate cogent and nuanced arguments, and present these lucidly both orally and in writing
- engage to a high standard in observational, analytical and evaluative thinking about evidence, arguments and interpretations, forming sound and sometimes original judgements on the basis of evidence and argument
- present material in written form to a high standard, with discrimination and lucidity in use of language, professional referencing, and clear and effective layout
- extract both key elements and nuance from complex information, and identify and solve associated problems using a wide range of methodologies
- display creativity and originality both in problem-solving and in the development and communication of ideas and arguments
- work with considerable independence and intellectual initiative, employing effective time-management skills to enable the timely completion of set tasks, and reflect on their progress
- work creatively and flexibly with others to perform assigned tasks within diverse group settings
- demonstrate respect for others' views and an enhanced capacity to reflect critically and modify position when warranted
- make effective and appropriate use of digital resources and information technology as a source of information, means of communication and aid to learning
- demonstrate a critical understanding of links between the study of the ancient world and modern societal issues, using interdisciplinary insight to apply knowledge of historical approaches and systems to issues including sustainability, resource exploitation, gender and racial inequality and socioeconomic disparities
- practice sustainability throughout learning and assessment, minimising their impact and preserving the artefacts and sources they handle. Also demonstrate an initiative to develop further sustainable practices in relation to Classics and Ancient History.

## 5 List of references and further resources

QAA and Advance HE (2021) Education for Sustainable Development Guidance  
[www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code/education-for-sustainable-development](https://www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code/education-for-sustainable-development)

## 6 Membership of the Advisory Groups for the Subject Benchmark Statement for Classics and Ancient History (including Byzantine Studies and Modern Greek)

### Membership of the Advisory Group for the Subject Benchmark Statement for Classics and Ancient History (including Byzantine Studies and Modern Greek) (2022)

Professor Gesine Manuwald (Chair)	University College London
Dr Anne Alwis	University of Kent
Professor David Carter	University of Reading
Cailin Casselman	University of Cambridge
Dr James Corke-Webster	King's College London
Dr Jonathan Eaton	Teesside University
Professor Derrik Ferney	QAA Officer
Dr Kate Gilliver	Cardiff University
Dr John Holton	Newcastle University
Dr Ersin Hussein	Swansea University
Charlotte Loveridge	Oxford University Press
Dr Sharon Marshall	University of Exeter
Dr Donncha O'Rourke	University of Edinburgh
Dr Elizabeth Pender	University of Leeds
Professor Nigel Pollard	Swansea University
Professor James Robson	The Open University
Amy Spencer	QAA Coordinator
Alice Tetstall	Swansea University
Stuart Thomson	Charist's Hospital School

QAA would like to thank Professor Elizabeth Cleaver, Professor Michael McLinden and the Disabled Students' Commission for their valued contributions to the development of the Statement.

### Membership of the Reading Group for the Subject Benchmark Statement for Classics and Ancient History (including Byzantine Studies and Modern Greek) (2022)

Dr Philip Burton  
Professor Helen Lovatt

Professor Lynette Mitchell  
Sophie Ngan  
Dr Kelli Rudolph

University of Birmingham  
Council of University Classical  
Departments  
University of Exeter  
University of Durham  
University of Kent

## **Membership of the Advisory Group for the Subject Benchmark Statement for Classics and Ancient History (including Byzantine Studies and Modern Greek) (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 Classics and Ancient History (including Byzantine Studies and Modern Greek) from 2014.

Professor Greg Woolf (Chair)  
Dr Andy Smith

University of St Andrews  
QAA

## **Membership of the Advisory Group for the Subject Benchmark Statement for Classics and Ancient History (including Byzantine Studies and Modern Greek) (2014)**

Details provided below are as published in the third edition of the Subject Benchmark Statement.

Professor Greg Woolf (Chair)  
Professor Roderick Beaton  
Dr Errietta Bissa  
Dr Anastasia Christofilopoulou  
Dr Josephine Crawley-Quinn

Peter D'Sena  
Dr Jonathan Eaton  
Dr Timothy Greenwood

Samuel Jones (Student Reader)

University of St Andrews  
Society for Modern Greek Studies  
University of Wales Trinity Saint David  
The Fitzwilliam Museum  
Council of University Classical  
Departments  
Higher Education Academy  
Newcastle College  
Society for the Promotion of Byzantine  
Studies  
University of Manchester

Dr Kurt Lampe

Dr Peter Liddel

Dr Genevieve Liveley

Dr Paul Roberts

Dr James Robson

Brigitte Stockton

The Bristol Institute of Greece, Rome  
and the Classical Tradition

University of Manchester

University of Bristol

The British Museum

The Open University

QAA

## Membership of the Advisory Group for the Subject Benchmark Statement for Classics and Ancient History (including Byzantine Studies and Modern Greek) (2007)

Details provided below are as published in the second edition of the Subject  
Benchmark Statement.

Professor R Osborne (Chair)

Dr S Phillippo

Professor J Powell

Professor C Smith

University of Cambridge

University of Newcastle upon Tyne

Royal Holloway, University of London

University of St Andrews

## Membership of the Advisory Group for Classics and Ancient History (including Byzantine Studies and Modern Greek) (2000)

Details provided below are as published in the original Subject Benchmark  
Statement.

Professor M Schofield (Chair)

Professor D C Braund

Professor C Carey

K Dowden

Dr C Emlyn-Jones

Professor E Jeffreys

Professor A B Lloyd

Professor C A Martindale

Dr E A Moignard

Professor M E Mullett

Professor R G Osbourne

University of Cambridge

University of Exeter

Royal Holloway and Bedford New  
College

University of Birmingham

The Open University

University of Oxford

University of Wales, Swansea

University of Bristol

University of Glasgow

Queen's University Belfast

University of Oxford

J J Paterson  
Dr T Rajak  
C M Roueché  
Professor R W Sharples  
Dr P C de Souza  
Dr C J Tuplin  
Dr G M King (Secretary)

University of Newcastle upon Tyne  
University of Reading  
King's College London  
University College London  
St Mary's College, Strawberry Hill  
University of Liverpool  
University of Cambridge

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