



Subject Benchmark Statement

**Communication, Media, Film and Cultural
Studies**

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About this Statement

This document is a QAA Subject Benchmark Statement for Communication, Media, Film and Cultural Studies that defines what can be expected of a graduate in the subject, in terms of what they might know, do and understand at the end of their studies. Subject Benchmark Statements are an established part of the quality assurance arrangements in UK higher education, but not a regulatory requirement. They are sector-owned reference points, developed and written by academics and practitioners on behalf of their subject. Subject Benchmark Statements also describe the nature and characteristics of awards in a particular subject or area. Subject Benchmark Statements are published in QAA's capacity as an expert quality body on behalf of the higher education sector. A summary of the Statement is also available on the QAA website.

Key changes from the previous Subject Benchmark Statement include:

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

How can I use this document?

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

They may also be used as a reference point by external examiners in considering whether the design of a course and the threshold standards of achievement are comparable with those of other higher education providers. They also support

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

You may want to read this document if you are:

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

Relationship to legislation

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

The status of the Statement will differ depending on 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 the [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 for Higher Education](#), which will be helpful when using this Statement - for example, in [course design](#), [learning and teaching](#), [external expertise](#) and [monitoring and evaluation](#).

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

1 Context and purposes of a Communication, Media, Film and Cultural Studies degree

Context

1.1 As fields of study, Communication, Media, Film and Cultural Studies are distinguished by their focus on cultural and communicative activities as central forces in shaping, critiquing and commenting on economic, political, psychological, environmental and social life. Graduates in Communication, Media, Film and Cultural Studies demonstrate knowledge, creativity and reflection on how we create, communicate and interpret meaning.

1.2 These courses have their intellectual roots in various disciplines within areas of the arts, humanities and social sciences. They have also drawn on the concepts, competencies and knowledge developed within the major areas of creative and professional practice in the cultural, film and communications industries, and on insights from design and creative practices, business, marketing, computing and emerging technologies.

1.3 Within these fields, degree courses are necessarily characterised by a diversity of emphases, including theoretical frameworks, research specialisms, practice and applicability, and professional contexts. Often combining the search for rigorous knowledge and understanding with the development of students' creative and reflexive capacities in innovative ways, they offer courses relevant to students' futures both in work and as citizens. Titles may include, for example: advertising; broadcasting; communication studies; cultural studies; subject histories; digital, film, television, media or screen studies; interactive media; journalism; film, television and media production; animation; games studies; publishing; political communication and lobbying; publishing; content creation; cultural management; and public relations. However, this Subject Benchmark Statement is not intended to be prescriptive in this regard and only provides a framework for courses in these fields, within which individual departments, or subject teams, can recognise themselves and their students, and within which they can continue to develop.

1.4 The increase of degree offerings in these subject areas reflects the expansion of the creative and cultural industries, their economic contributions, and the need for these industries to have **new and diverse talent**. Graduates from degrees covered by this Statement also make significant contributions outside the creative and cultural industries, and the eclectic relevance and transferability of skills within its fields are part of its core characteristic. As such, it also informs and supports a plurality of diverse industries and creative practices. New degrees in the subjects covered by this Statement may engage with developments and entanglements in and with, for example, cultural sensibilities, emerging technologies and changing forms of practice, **increased emphasis on sustainability and ethical considerations**, and the characteristics set out below should be viewed in this agile context. Such continued development and diversity of practice is central to these fields and to the development of their students' potential.

1.5 The focus of this Statement is on the single honours degree course. It is recognised, however, that Communication, Media, Film and Cultural Studies may also be found in combined and joint honours degree courses. Just as single honours courses in these fields combine, in different ways, components from other Statements, we anticipate that combined and joint honours courses draw from them as appropriate.

1.6 This Subject Benchmark Statement provides both a description of the nature of Communication, Media, Film and Cultural Studies and offers guidance on the standards expected of graduates in terms of their knowledge, understanding, skills and abilities upon completion of a degree in this field. It primarily addresses bachelor single or joint honours courses in the field (FHEQ Levels 4-6 and FQHEIS Levels 7-10), though some sections may also be relevant to development of foundation year provision and apprenticeships. It is intended to be a broad framework within which providers can develop courses that respond to the needs of students, and which acknowledges the diversity of approaches to Communication, Media, Film and Cultural Studies.

1.7 Postgraduate taught degrees (FHEQ Level 7 and FQHEIS Level 11) are underpinned by the same core attributes as the undergraduate degree level study, but require students to demonstrate advanced and nuanced knowledge and skills in terms of their subject specialism, their critical and creative skills, development of practice, or a combination thereof. Achievement of the appropriate outcomes at this level lies in the consolidation of existing knowledge

and/or the generation of new knowledge through a diverse range of outputs or creative artefacts.

Purposes and characteristics of a Communication, Media, Film and Cultural Studies degree

1.8 Communication, Media, Film and Cultural Studies are disciplines closely allied to other social sciences, humanities, arts, and computer science and informatics. They often offer rich opportunities for interdisciplinary work. The specific focus and broad range of individual degree courses determines not only the knowledge bases on which they draw, but also the balance of skills and approaches developed within them. Increasingly, this includes access to development of creative practice, including skills based around new and emerging technologies, and the application of these to production and research in these disciplines.

1.9 Depending on the nature of the course, graduates will demonstrate some of the following skills.

- to contextualise their learning historically, politically, globally, socially and societally, economically, culturally, environmentally, and technologically
- to comprehend how different and diverse social groups intersect, and how these groups and individuals variably make use of, and engage with, forms of media and communication
- to make critical judgements in the understanding, production and evaluation of relevant forms, contexts and scenarios and demonstrate the real-world professional application of knowledge and skills developed through the degree
- to consider and evaluate their own work in a reflexive manner, with reference to the academic and/or professional codes of practices, ethics, conventions, issues and debates.

Research, critical analysis, production and professional practice

1.10 Graduates will typically demonstrate the ability to:

- engage critically with major thinkers and debates within the field, putting them **into practice**
- understand forms of communication, media, film and culture as they have emerged historically and appreciate the processes through which they have come into being, with reference to social, cultural, environmental and technological change
- carry out sustained, independent and critical enquiry and research
- formulate appropriate research questions or enquiries that inform practice
- identify, employ and evaluate research methods suitable for the context and defined research **problems**
- locate, retrieve, evaluate and draw upon a range of data, sources and conceptual frameworks appropriate to research, production and professional practice in the chosen area
- draw on the strengths and understand the limits of relevant quantitative and/or qualitative methods, and be able to apply this knowledge critically in their own work
- show analytical ability and the capacity to consider and solve problems, which might be theoretical, practical or professional in nature
- demonstrate sensitivity to the subjectivities and intersections of different cultural positions, including their own, understanding that research and production are not neutral processes
- **show an awareness for historical inequity in representation in the media (both content and workforce)**
- exhibit imaginative insight and creativity as appropriate to the context
- **show awareness and/or consideration of sustainable practices, including in terms of the impact of media and communication work, along with an understanding of climate resilience and the challenges of the transition to sustainable societies**
- locate, understand, critique and comply with ethical codes produced by relevant subject and industry associations, and research standards, **and show a strong awareness of lessons from past incidents of media ethics violations.**

Citizenship

1.11 Recognising that they will work across varied contexts, for example hyper-local, local, national, international and intersections of diverse identities, graduates may demonstrate the ability to:

- apply their critical understanding to ethically and culturally responsible use of communication, media, film and cultural forms, practices and technologies in both professional and everyday contexts
- use communication, media, film and cultural expression in ways informed by cultural and media literacies (including digital and information literacy)
- critically appraise socio-cultural, **socio-economic** and political debates relevant to communication, media, film and culture
- develop and foster confidence to engage as responsible and informed citizens
- understand media and cultural policies and the ways in which they are developed and implemented, **including historical injustices in these policies**
- consider the ways in which diverse communities and organisations can contribute to the development of media and cultural policies and practices
- analyse the role of community and participatory media and communication forms in contributing to cultural and political debates and the contesting of power
- consider global sustainability practices and debates in relation to communication and cultural forms, **and understand the need for effective community communication and ownership in delivering a sustainable transition that leaves no-one behind**
- demonstrate an openness to diverse discussions and debates in which their own informed opinion and lived experiences may be challenged by others.

Transferable skills

1.12 Graduates may demonstrate the ability to:

- work in flexible, creative and independent ways, with an awareness of relevant ethical considerations, self-direction and reflexivity
- communicate effectively in interpersonal settings, expressing sensitivity to cultural differences, and an openness to knowledge, ideas and approaches unfamiliar to them
- collate, organise and deploy ideas and information in order to formulate arguments cogently, and express them effectively in written, verbal and/or non-verbal communication, visual or other forms
- retrieve and generate information, and evaluate sources, in carrying out independent research
- organise and manage supervised, self-directed projects
- work productively in a group or team, showing abilities at different times to listen, contribute and also to lead effectively
- deliver work to a given length, format, brief and deadline, properly referencing sources and ideas and making use, as appropriate, of a problem-solving approach
- apply entrepreneurial skills, if and where appropriate, in dealing with audiences, users, clients, consumers, markets and/or sources
- develop an information literacy to identify and evaluate appropriate sources and evidence considering cultural contexts and sensitivities
- engage critically with a variety of media practices and competences
- understand that communication technologies, practices and products are not 'neutral' but are developed and accessed in relation to their social, cultural, economic, historical, environmental and geographical contexts
- explore career opportunities in order to prepare for potential employment destinations.

Equality, diversity and inclusion

1.13 This Subject Benchmark Statement comprises a wide range of subject fields that in their own ways reflect the richness of our society, from cultural, social, economic and political perspectives. As such, these distinct subject areas inform and cultivate equality, equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) within the academy and the myriad of professional environments that employ graduates.

1.14 Research and education in Communication, Media, Film and Cultural Studies have a longstanding history of challenging and critiquing inherited hierarchies of power, organisation and representation that have spawned

concern, and criticism, among both practitioners and audiences, with many calls for change. This places considerable responsibility on everyone teaching in the field to be the agents of change needed to ensure greater fairness and parity of experience and representation for everyone. As such, this Subject Benchmark Statement seeks to position the academy as a place which recognises the challenge and is committed to addressing the issues and advancing knowledge or evidence bases.

1.15 This Subject Benchmark Statement seeks to instil within its subject's culture and practices a mode of behaviour that rightfully embeds inclusivity as a norm, and in doing so prompts, encourages and supports its industries, and society more widely, to follow in its footsteps. Furthermore, the guidance offered in relation to EDI should be viewed as a living document that requires regular monitoring and evaluation to determine its ongoing relevance and significance.

1.16 Our students, and staff, are drawn from diverse backgrounds and deserve to learn, and work in inclusive environments which support people regardless of age, gender, race, disability, neurodiversity, sexual orientation, religion and belief, or socio-economic background. Commitment to EDI as both a policy and practice should be embedded into all courses and practices in Communication, Media, Film and Cultural Studies.

1.17 EDI is not optional and comes with ethical obligations, permeating all aspects of course design and delivery. Establishing policies, practices and systems that must strive for fairness and equity for all, champions the importance of EDI and ensures that these values are reliably, consistently and transparently supported in integrated ways which underline its intersectional nature.

1.18 Students, and staff, should be actively recruited from across society, with active recruitment policies that seek to identify and support underrepresented people in recruitment campaigns and application processes. Selection and interview processes should embody good practice in all its aspects.

1.19 Beyond the recruitment process, work must be done to ensure that all students feel welcome and supported in their study. Providers should support with combatting biases, including unconscious biases, and should support student and staff retention by explicitly engaging with and supporting underrepresented groups, including those who are care-experienced, come from a deprived socio-economic background, or are from a global majority ethnicity.

Accessibility

1.20 Accessibility involves ensuring that every part of the educational experience is designed to optimise access for everyone. It is understood that accessibility is not a single point of reference and can have emotional, functional and technical aspects that courses should consider holistically to ensure inclusivity and equality. Being inclusive is about giving equal access and opportunities to everyone wherever possible and to establishing practices and structures that allow equal access and chance of success regardless of education, cultural or social backgrounds, neurodiversity, or disability status. Communication, Media, Film and Cultural Studies courses should ensure that accessibility is a core part of all aspects of course design, delivery and assessment, and that inclusivity is a guiding principle in the field of study at all levels.

1.21 Reasonable adjustments should be provided to ensure equality of access and a drive toward the eradication of attainment gaps based on accessibility in all its formats. Communication, Media, Film and Cultural Studies programmes should approach accessibility requests with respect and understanding.

1.22 Learning resources should also be accessible to all and presented in a timely way using appropriate methods of delivery dependent on student needs. Learning support should be individualised to the needs of students and managed in a supportive environment. Utilising a pedagogy of care that focuses on trust, inclusion, respect and support is crucial to ensuring that everyone feels included, valued and able to contribute and participate.

1.23 Providers should ensure that all students are able to access all of the opportunities associated with their course. Where students come from a deprived socio-economic background or are care-experienced, providers must ensure that available site visits, placements and experience days are made accessible and that cost barriers are removed wherever possible.

Sustainability

1.24 Sustainable development has become central to the strategy and practice of many higher education institutions, reflecting the increasing wider social awareness and recognition of sustainability agendas. Sustainability is not only about climate change and other environmental questions, but an intellectual framework and ethical principle that informs contemporary social practice. It

encompasses a broader range of goals and aspirations to improve social justice, poverty, health and education at local and global levels, often drawing on external reference points such as the [United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals \(SDGs\)](#).

1.25 Sustainability agendas offer new lenses through which to view the relationships between social, cultural, economic and environmental challenges. Higher education is pivotal in enabling the knowledge and skills that are needed to address such challenges. Course design processes should use these lenses in considering content, assessment, employability, delivery practices and facilities, and the role of higher education in changing rather than reproducing or perpetuating unsustainable social practices. This Subject Benchmark Statement should be further considered in the context of the [Guidance on Education for Sustainable Development](#) (ESD) published by QAA and Advance HE.

1.26 Communication, Media, Film and Cultural Studies have all long engaged with questions of diversity, inclusion and power relations that are essential to enhancing social justice and sustainable development; indeed, many of these questions are foundational in these subject areas. Degree courses in these areas enable learners to develop high-level abilities to both empathise and argue, to collaborate, create and debate. [UNESCO has published resources for educators](#) developing learning objectives around sustainable development. These outline eight core competencies that higher education should enable learners to develop in order to progress sustainability objectives:

- systems thinking
- anticipatory thinking
- normative competency
- strategic thinking
- collaborative competency
- critical thinking
- self-awareness
- integrated problem-solving competency

1.27 These competencies can be understood as [ways of thinking, ways of practicing, and ways of being](#). Degree programmes in Communication, Media, Film and Cultural Studies all develop these core competencies in distinctive ways, an established strength of these subject areas. **The disciplines' focus on narrative construction, audience engagement, and cultural analysis provides unique**

pathways for developing social sustainability competencies, enabling graduates to challenge harmful stereotypes, create inclusive media representation, facilitate cross-cultural dialogue, and develop ethical frameworks for communication that respect diverse cultural contexts and socio-economic realities.

1.28 ESD adopts a holistic approach to interrelated questions of climate change, social justice and global inequality across the curriculum. This may include critically analysing global discourses of sustainable development, recognising the value of local and **Indigenous** knowledge, and the importance and relevance of alternative models. Communication, Media, Film and Cultural Studies subjects are also concerned with media representation of sustainable development, holding governments and organisations to account, and raising awareness and informing debates. Degrees in this field may also be concerned with how creative and media industries affect or contribute to the climate crisis, for example through practices, consumptions, facilities or infrastructure **and investments**. Degrees in this field should recognise the importance of community action and ownership in the transition to environmentally sustainable living and working and should support students to develop communication strategies that engage with a wide range of stakeholders and communities.

1.29 ESD offers vital opportunities to challenge established approaches and assumptions **around representation, power and voice** not only within higher education in these subject areas, but also within the industries and sectors employing their graduates. For example, assessment, placement and employability strategies can look beyond aiming to prepare learners for industries and can also work to influence those industries to better engage with sustainability goals. ESD to this end offers an opportunity to reflect on and challenge established approaches to Communication, Media, Film and Cultural Studies. As such, it should be integrated throughout degree courses and not be simply confined to specialist modules.

1.30 The **SDGs** can help to frame Communication, Media, Film and Cultural Studies curricula in ways that reflects the rich and diverse context of ESD. This critical thinking should also extend to a reflexive and agile approach in considering other external references for sustainable development to also serve as a force for advancing action on sustainability through global and interdisciplinary perspectives

1.31 Students should also be encouraged to reflect on sustainability in and of their practice, embed elements such as self-assessment of activities and be aware of relevant sustainability accreditations within the sector for example [The Studio Sustainability Standard](#). There are a number of external frameworks and resources that can be incorporated into curriculum design, which may also offer external recognition, such as that provided by the [BAFTA albert Education Partnership](#) for production and screen skills. Students should be able to consider the carbon impact of the media work they do, the waste they create and the reusability of resources.

1.32 By drawing on this Subject Benchmark Statement in conjunction with relevant external standards, degree courses in Communication, Media, Film and Cultural Studies can seek to establish sustainable learning practices and spaces as part of initial course validation or periodic review of existing courses. Placing ESD at the core of curriculum design also offers an opportunity to reflect on the impact and sustainability of our practice as educators. When considering the facilities and resourcing of courses in this area, it is important to include their environmental and ecological impact and to systematically adopt more sustainable technologies, practices and methods where possible. This pursuit might range from use of energy efficient lighting in studio spaces, to including energy efficiency or environmental impact of cameras and recording equipment in procurement considerations, implementing procedures for minimising the impact of waste or consumables in any part of student work, considering the wastage involved in set production and minimising this through the [Six Rs](#), or considering and raising awareness of media's significant digital carbon footprint and methods to minimise it (e.g. more efficient devices, optimising device use, data management and storage). Resources from [The Alliance for Sustainability Leadership in Education \(EAUC\)](#) provide general higher education frameworks and guidelines that can support such initiatives, though relevant industry or external standards can also be incorporated as effective ways of assessing or benchmarking sustainability.

1.33 Students should be equipped with knowledge and understanding about climate resilience, and an awareness of methods of developing practice that protect source of media from the risks of climate damage.

1.34 Students should be aware of the threat misinformation poses to achievement of the SDGs and should understand the importance of objectivity and recognising their own biases in their work.

Employability, enterprise and entrepreneurship education

1.35 [Enterprise and entrepreneurship education](#) supports behaviours, attributes and capabilities that are likely to have a significant impact on the individual student in terms of successful careers. Enterprise and entrepreneurship education is particularly pertinent in Communication, Media, Film and Cultural Studies, since many students in these subjects will go on to work within constantly changing cultural, ecological and technological contexts, in roles and with technologies that do not yet exist.

1.36 Enterprise and entrepreneurship education within these subjects is taking place against a backdrop of huge success for the creative and cultural industries in the UK. The degree subjects covered by this Statement are essential pipelines in talent development for the creative economy which is demonstrating not only fiscal gains, but also reputational success on an international scale. According to the Department for Culture, Media and Sport, they accounted for 2.3 million jobs in 2021, and represent an increase of 41% in gross value added between 2011 and 2019; 2.5x that achieved by the wider UK economy.

1.37 By incorporating enterprise and entrepreneurial education, institutions can equip students of Communication, Media, Film and Cultural Studies with the entrepreneurial and enterprise skills necessary to thrive in creative careers, enabling them to navigate dynamic and changing landscapes, seize entrepreneurial opportunities and make a positive impact in their chosen fields. **Such graduates are well placed to add social, cultural, environmental and economic value to society through their careers, and beyond employment, to lead meaningful, rewarding and self-determined creative lives.**

2 Distinctive features of a Communication, Media, Film and Cultural Studies degree

Characteristics

2.1 Communication, Media, Film and Cultural Studies are distinguished by their focus on cultural and communicative activities as central forces in shaping economic, political, psychological and social life. Within these fields, degree courses are characterised by a diversity of emphases. Courses cover a broad range across the general areas of content relating to culture and/or communication, media and film, while others focus on a particular practice or subject specialisms. Courses may focus on the social, the contemporary, the aesthetic, the historical, the technological or the practical production aspects of these forms, or a combination of them.

2.2 Characteristics of these degrees are often based around, and engage students in, what the European Charter for Media Literacy called the 3c's: 'cultural access', 'critical understanding' and 'creative activity'.

2.3 Some courses pay particular attention to the practical and technological aspects of communication, media and cultural practices; others focus on their economic or business applications, their relationship to the environment, their industrial and management structures and methods, their audiences and social uses, and/or their symbolic, aesthetic or affective possibilities. Some may focus primarily on key theories and philosophical, political, psychological or sociological approaches to communication, media, film and culture.

2.4 Some degree courses give greater significance to historical dimensions, while others emphasise contemporary and emerging developments.

2.5 Some include the study of the most fundamental modes of human communication (spoken and written language, visual and aural communication, face-to-face and interpersonal communication, and group dynamics), while others may focus on specific media, technologies, cultural systems, contexts and/or everyday practices.

2.6 Some focus primarily on professional practices and their associated creative and commercial management, including the legal and other aspects of intellectual property rights, and intellectual and/or technical skills, while others

either do not offer any direct experience of media/cultural production, or offer experience of practice primarily as a mechanism for critical reflection. Others still may encourage students to question, challenge and resist existing professional and theoretical approaches to adopt more radical and activist perspectives on the value of media, film and communication.

2.7 Some may emphasise the artistic qualities of media, film and cultural forms, through practice or analysis, or both.

Nature and scope

2.8 Degree courses in Communication, Media, Film and Cultural Studies are linked by a shared recognition of several propositions, though they may vary in the emphasis given to these concerns. These propositions are:

- people's lives are shaped in part by a great variety of aesthetic, communicative, cultural and environmental systems and practices
- the cultural, media, film and communication industries are significant areas of employment, and professional practice within these industries requires systematic, critical and reflexive education
- communicative, cultural, film and media industries play key roles in generating symbolic resources through which people individually and collectively understand their past, present and future
- communicative and cultural institutions and processes are central to the organisation of everyday social, economic and political life, offering a range of aesthetic pleasures and social engagements, and providing central resources for the formation and expression of individual and collective identities
- communication, media, film and culture play pivotal roles in economic and political organisation at local, regional, national, international and global levels. Their public forms are often organised by large-scale institutions whose structures, operations, regulations and performances merit sustained analysis
- opportunities to participate actively in the central sites of public culture and communication are differentially distributed in ways that are linked to prevailing structures of economic and symbolic power, and central axes of social division such as ethnicity, gender, age, religion, disability, nationality, location, sexuality and social class

- beyond large-scale institutions, many other groups, communities and individual producers contribute to the communicative life of any society, often in ways which challenge or oppose prevailing culture
- there is a vital need for informed debate on the political, legal and ethical aspects of communication and culture that takes into account the above points, and which considers the importance of access and inclusion in public communicative life for a democratic society
- communication, media, film and culture play a role in constructing and enabling us to perform and (re)present our sense of identity (or identities), both as individuals and as socially connected beings
- understanding these fields requires drawing on the theories and research methodologies developed within the arts and humanities; applied arts; and social, computer and other science disciplines
- understanding these fields requires drawing on the concepts, competencies and knowledge developed within the major areas of creative and professional practice in communication, media, film and cultural industries.

2.9 Individual degree courses use the above sets of propositions in different ways and in varying combinations. Strongly interdisciplinary courses may deploy different approaches. Professional and/or vocational elements may feature strongly in some courses, while others may use practice work by students mainly to inform critical understanding.

2.10 No degree course gives equal attention to all these elements. Most courses, however, promote a combination of understanding and skills. Many that emphasise critical engagement also require students to produce a substantial piece of self-managed research and/or a creative production or portfolio of work demonstrating their command of specific skills. Similarly, courses that concentrate primarily on media practice or production also require students to develop analytical and research skills together with a critical grasp of their responsibilities as practitioners, and awareness of the dynamics, whether affective, cultural, economic, environmental, ethical, legal, political or social, which shape working environments.

Progression

2.11 Over the course of a degree with honours (FHEQ Level 6; FQHEIS Level 10) students on Communication, Media, Film and Cultural Studies courses will

progress from one level of study to the next, in line with the regulations and processes for each institution. However, it is expected that each level would see the attainment of knowledge, expertise and experience that builds towards the final achievement of meeting the threshold-level subject-specific and generic skills listed in this Statement. This will usually include successful completion and the award of credit for the full range of learning and assessment, including any practical components. Upon graduation from an undergraduate degree, it would be expected that a student who had achieved a second-class degree or higher would be capable of, and equipped for, undertaking postgraduate study in Communication, Media, Film and Cultural Studies or a related discipline. Entry requirements to postgraduate courses are, however, determined by individual providers and may require specified levels of achievement at undergraduate level.

2.12 Undergraduates studying Communication, Media, Film and Cultural Studies courses as part of a combined or joint degree with other subjects will achieve core elements of the specific and generic skills outlined in this Subject Benchmark Statement and will add others according to the topics covered in the other subject(s) of their degree. Additionally, they may explore the overlap between different disciplines, creating further opportunities for interdisciplinary study

2.13 In a standard undergraduate honours degree course in Communication, Media, Film and Cultural Studies, students may exit earlier and be eligible for a Certificate of Higher Education, a Diploma of Higher Education, or other awards depending upon the levels of study completed to a satisfactory standard. At providers in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, the standard duration of a full-time undergraduate course is three years. Scottish 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. Students following part-time routes accumulate academic credit in proportion to the intensity of their study, and their total study time and credit value would be the equivalent of the three or four-year degree.

Flexibility

2.14 Higher education providers structure the courses they offer to support students' learning and attainment. Depending on the educational mission of the provider, this may include opportunities to engage in learning on or off campus,

online, and/or through hybrid learning, distance learning options, arranged in terms, by semester, year-long, block or other formats. These may be offered in full and/or part-time modes of study and credit may be accumulated through the completion of micro-credentials or short accredited learning.

Partnership

2.15 Courses in Communication, Media, Film and Cultural Studies may be developed in partnership with a wide range of external stakeholders, including industry partners, cultural institutions and relevant professional statutory and regulatory bodies (PSRBs). Many courses actively develop partnerships with relevant industry and professional bodies to support student development of entrepreneurial skills, particularly through practical and intellectual skills development, joint events and collaborative projects, and internships and placements. Partnerships with industry, the third sector and other external stakeholders can also enrich curricula and the student experience by encouraging the development of entrepreneurial behaviours, attributes and capabilities such as creativity, innovation and critical thinking.

2.16 Courses may also be enriched by work-based learning opportunities facilitated by a wide range of partners. These may be specific to organisations in the creative industries, or bringing Communication, Media, Film and Cultural Studies expertise to other sectors. Such work-based learning can be in the form of assignments with a live brief or industry mentors, through to short placements or a sandwich year.

2.17 Higher education providers may also offer courses in Communication, Media, Film and Cultural Studies in partnership with other UK or international providers. This may include study exchange opportunities of varying lengths, or opportunities to study part or the whole of their degree at partner institutions.

Monitoring and review

2.18 Degree-awarding bodies, and their collaborative partnerships, routinely collect and analyse information and undertake periodic course review according to their own needs. Considering the student voice will form part of this. They draw on a range of external reference points, including this Statement, to ensure that their provision aligns with sector norms. Monitoring and evaluation are a periodic assessment of a course, conducted internally or by external independent

evaluators. Evaluation uses information from both current and historic monitoring to develop an understanding of student achievement or inform future course planning.

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

2.20 The external examiner system currently in use across the UK higher education sector also helps to ensure consistency in the way academic standards are secured by degree-awarding bodies. Typically, external examiners will be asked to comment on the types, principles and purposes of assessments being offered to students. They will consider the types of modules on offer to students, the outcomes of a cohort and how these compare to similar provision offered within other UK higher education providers. External examiners are asked to produce a report each year and make recommendations for changes to modules and assessments (where appropriate). Subject Benchmark Statements, such as this one, can play an important role in supporting external examiners in advising on whether threshold standards are being met in a specific subject area.

2.21 Courses with professional outcomes may also require evaluation and accreditation from professional, statutory, and regulatory bodies (PSRBs). These are usually done through a combination of site visits and desk-based reviews, and course accreditation provided for a fixed period of time.

3 Content, structure and delivery

Content

3.1 Individual courses within the fields of Communication, Media, Film and Cultural Studies articulate their own distinctive principles of progression within, and coherence and balance across, the particular curriculum and learning experiences offered to students. Teaching, learning and assessment are designed to reflect the specific aims, emphases and learning outcomes of the course, and students are made aware of these at the outset

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

3.3 Progression through courses leads to an increasing emphasis on student self-direction and self-responsibility in the teaching and learning strategies deployed. Part of this process involves the development of communicative and research competencies among students.

Teaching and learning

3.4 Teaching and learning strategies promote the following learning processes:

- **awareness raising and knowledge acquisition:** the process through which a student is introduced to, and engages with, new areas of knowledge and experience, and broadens and deepens existing knowledge
- **conceptual and critical understanding:** the process whereby a student engages in critical analysis of texts, fields of knowledge, concepts, and cultural and production practices, testing their analysis against familiar or preconceived understanding
- **practice:** the process through which a student acquires practical experience, skills and the opportunity for creative expression and/or thinking in a range of activities, from empirical research to production work to work placements
- **creativity:** utilised in originating and developing innovative ideas, solving problems, design and aesthetics, fostered through personal development and self-awareness

- **literacies:** the process through which students develop confidence in reading the representational, technological and cultural significance of media, film, communication and cultural texts and contexts, **including climate and misinformation literacy**
- **critical reflection:** the processes through which a student acquires and reflects on new knowledge and understanding, and on their own learning experiences and performance.

3.5 Some courses will be delivered wholly online, others wholly in person. Approaches may include synchronous or asynchronous learning, blended learning, flipped classroom, or any combination of these.

- learning may take place in large and small groups, and individual learning and teaching situations - it may combine tutor-led, student-led and independent learning sessions
- learning will typically make use of a range of technological systems for accessing data, resources, contacts and literature, and for the effective acquisition of creative, critical, research and professional skills.

3.6 The learning context encourages active engagement with cultural and communicative forms and practices, and with examples from the medium/media or cultural practice being studied and, where appropriate, contact with a variety of academic and non-academic speakers or organisations, which may include industry, NGOs, audiences and community groups. **The learning context will encourage students with a wide range of lived experiences and academic backgrounds to engage with content.**

Embedding equality, diversity and inclusion

3.7 Curricula should embed a diverse range of methods, viewpoints, subjects and approaches **and interdisciplinary perspectives with a commitment to going beyond tokenism.** Equality, diversity and inclusion should not be compartmentalised, but embedded across the course with a commitment to ongoing development of good EDI knowledge, understanding and practice as they pertain to the diversity of programmes within Communication, Media, Film and Cultural Studies. This includes diversifying module content, learning resources, theoretical approaches and assessment design, **and ensuring that students can deploy their own lived experiences and unique perspectives in their work.**

3.8 Courses will aim to be designed to cater to a diverse range of students from various backgrounds, with a focus on inclusivity and belonging. Students will be encouraged to engage in critical dialogue and challenge established paradigms related to, for example, gender, sexuality, religion, class, race, disability, colonialism and imperialism, **along with other forms of injustice.**

3.9 To critically examine dominant approaches to the discipline(s) and ways in which they can perpetuate exclusion, courses should actively engage and support students in their development as critical and self-reflective learners, encouraging reflection on ways in which they are taught and how they themselves learn and behave.

3.10 Courses will create inclusive learning experiences, ensuring accessibility for all students, regardless of their background, and promote equity. Learning resources should also be accessible to all and presented in a timely way using appropriate methods of delivery dependent on student needs. Learning support should be individualised to the needs of students and managed in a supportive environment. Utilising a pedagogy of care that focuses on trust, inclusion, respect and support is crucial to ensure that everyone feels included, valued and able to contribute and participate.

3.11 Creating safe, inclusive learning environments that encourage healthy, respectful dialogue is crucial in embedding and nurturing a sense of belonging for all. Inherent here is a need for everyone to be reflective of their own behaviours and to feel confident in challenging unacceptable practices, with safeguarding built in that is supportive and cognisant of challenges but open to, and supportive in, finding solutions.

3.12 Courses that comprise Communication, Media, Film and Cultural Studies all seek to grow a better understanding of our complex world in creative and critical ways that strive to be representative of our diverse society. This Subject Benchmark Statement acknowledges these challenges, and while recognising the disruptive nature of change, is itself intended to be a contributory factor and part of the change needed.

Developing entrepreneurship and enterprise skills

3.13 Careers in Communication, Media, Film and Cultural Studies benefit from a mixed skillset that combines an entrepreneurial mindset with creativity at its core, combined with critical thinking and subject-specific technical skills. These

elements are likely to be woven together in different ways for different courses and emphases will vary.

3.14 Communication, Media, Film and Cultural Studies courses support students to develop critical perspectives on media and creative industries, institutions, practices, texts and audiences, through primary and secondary research and analysis. Moreover, foundational skills in Communication, Media, Film and Cultural Studies courses - be that communication skills, interpersonal or teamworking skills, or technical competencies - are transferable in ways that affords graduates agility to work across a range of industries and types of organisations.

3.15 In addition to the subject knowledge described in the benchmark standards section, some courses in Communication, Media, Film and Cultural Studies may also provide students with essential enterprise skills, such as:

- intellectual property laws and practices, especially in relation to copyright, trademark and licensing regulations, enabling students to protect their own creative works and respect the rights of others
- **financial and legal literacy, enabling students to navigate the complex business landscape of relevant industries** - this may entail knowledge of budgeting, financial management, contract negotiation and legal considerations relevant to media enterprises, as well as an understanding of business structures, liability issues and insurance requirements that are crucial for successful entrepreneurship in both profit and non-profit sectors
- production finance, with particular regard to co-production models, sales and distribution agreements, sponsorship, crowdfunding and other income streams - acquiring skills to secure financing for media projects will allow students to bring their creative visions to life and sustain their entrepreneurial ventures
- **location scouting, taking care to consider ethical implications, respect of the cultural significance of locations and cultural themes and settings of the media being produced, and the environmental impacts of scouting, travelling to and from sites (such as carbon emissions) and of shooting on location (such as physical impact on the local environment).**

3.16 **If properly contextualised, the teaching of enterprise and entrepreneurship has the potential to promote equality, equity, diversity and inclusion by providing opportunities for underrepresented voices, fostering**

diverse narratives and empowering individuals to create their own platforms for expression, challenging traditional power structures and amplifying marginalised perspectives.

3.17 Furthermore, students should be encouraged to explore the ways in which enterprise and entrepreneurial mindsets can align with sustainable development goals by fostering innovative and sustainable approaches to media production and distribution, promoting responsible consumption and production, and addressing social and environmental challenges through projects that contribute to the achievement of international sustainability framework, for example the [United Nations Sustainable Development Goals](#). Students should be taught to understand the carbon footprint of the content they create, along with waste production, impact on the natural world and the reusability of resources.

Assessment

3.18 Assessment is an integral part of the learning process, and assessment of learning outcomes should address the skills highlighted in paragraphs 1.8-1.12.

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

3.20 Assessment strategies follow the specific aims, emphases and learning outcomes of the degree course, and reflect the range and balance of teaching and learning methods used. They are appropriate to the learning processes and intended learning outcomes. Courses seek to ensure that, within the variety of approaches taken, assessment is consistent both in the demands it makes on students and in the standards of judgement it applies. A varied approach to assessments has many opportunities, including, but not limited to, enhancing student experience and employability, catering for a diverse student body, and mitigating the effect of essay mills and technological assignment production.

3.21 Students should learn to make effective and ethical use of emerging technologies, while maintaining a critical awareness of how these may alter or challenge established professional norms and practices. This may range from (semi-)automated workflows, accessible user interfaces replacing coding or complex operations, through to use of adaptive technologies, machine learning

and artificial intelligence. Courses in Communication, Media, Film and Cultural Studies have a history of responding in agile ways to rapidly evolving forms and practices, and graduates in these disciplines are important in how society responds to such advances. Assessment strategies should be responsive to these developments, while ensuring students can still be assessed on the requisite subject knowledge, understanding and skills. This should also be seen in the context of preserving academic integrity in relation to use of artificial intelligence. For further guidance on this, please consult [QAA guidance](#) on generative AI.

3.22 Accordingly, assessment methods may draw from among the following:

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

3.23 Feedback is an essential part of assessment, to help students evaluate their progress and identify how they can improve further. Students should receive constructive feedback throughout their studies, with particular attention paid to building skills of self-reflection and self-criticality. Feedback is provided through various mechanisms, including written and spoken comments, group discussion and technology-aided systems, peer and self-assessment.

3.24 Feedback should be both formative as well as summative. It should focus on supporting students to understand how to improve their work (feedforward), both in terms of the assignment's specifics as well as their wider skill set and knowledge. Formative assessment enables students to see how well they are progressing and gives them feedback to develop further. Effective formative assessment and feedback occurs early, during and after the assessment process to help the student develop. The summative feedback evaluates how the student is doing, providing the student with a judgement on their abilities in line with the stated learning outcomes.

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

4 Benchmark standards

Introduction

4.1 This Subject Benchmark Statement sets out the minimum threshold, as well as typical and excellent, standards that a student will have demonstrated when they are awarded an honours degree in Communication, Media, Film and Cultural Studies, as well as the standards expected at master's level. Demonstrating these standards over time will show that a student has achieved the range of knowledge, understanding and skills expected of graduates in these subjects.

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 in The Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications of UK Degree-Awarding Bodies](#). This Annex sets out common descriptions of the four main degree outcome classifications for bachelor's degrees with honours: 1st, 2.1, 2.2 and 3rd. It can also be used as a reference point for other qualifications at FHEQ Level 7 and FQHEIS Level 11, including postgraduate certifications and postgraduate diplomas.

Threshold level

4.3 Graduates who have achieved the threshold level in a course within the fields of Communication, Media, Film and Cultural Studies are able to demonstrate sufficient grounding overall in the knowledge, understanding, subject-specific and general skills as defined below and as emphasised by their particular course. See section 2 for distinctive features of courses in this field.

Subject knowledge, understanding and skills

4.4 On graduating with an honours degree in Communication, Media, Film and Cultural Studies, students should typically be able to:

- demonstrate a knowledge and understanding of key debates and theoretical perspectives in Communication, Media, Film and Cultural Studies, including those that extend beyond the Western canon

- demonstrate an ability to engage in an analysis of media texts, using theoretical material, concepts and understanding
- understand the representational, technological and cultural significance of communication, media, film and cultural texts and contexts
- consider the ways in which diverse communities and organisations contribute to the development of media and cultural policies and practices
- analyse the role of media forms, including community and participatory media, in contributing to political and cultural debates and the contestation of power
- consider global issues, including sustainability practices and debates in relation to communication and cultural forms, **understanding the importance of media and communications in building coalitions of support for the transition to environmentally and socially sustainable societies**
- understand that communication technologies, practices and products are not 'neutral' but are developed and accessed in relation to their social, cultural, economic, historical, environmental and geographical contexts **which have often included considerable injustice**
- appreciate the ways in which questions of cultural value are experienced and understood, including how accounts of the world are created, maintained and reproduced, and how understandings of the self and the world are formed in relation to cultural texts and practices
- understand how different social groups and organisations interact, engage with and make use of various forms of media to communicate
- identify, evaluate and employ research methods suitable for the context - these may include digital methodologies, close textual analysis, archive research, research-by-practice, (auto)ethnography, critically reflective practice, audience research methods or participatory approaches
- be able to locate, retrieve, evaluate and draw upon a range of data, sources and conceptual frameworks appropriate to research, production and professional practice in the chosen area
- draw on the strengths and understand the limits of relevant quantitative and/or qualitative methods, and be able to apply this knowledge in their own work
- **understand the risks of misinformation and the importance of truthfulness and recognising one's biases as a media and communication practitioner**

- research and present an extended piece of research or practical equivalent
- demonstrate an understanding of and/or ability to engage in cultural and production practices, applying their theoretical understanding to production processes depending on the specific focus of their course
- demonstrate creative expression through practice depending on the specific focus of their course
- demonstrate an ability to reflect on new knowledge and understanding, and on their own learning experiences and performance
- understand the development of media, communication and/or film studies as a subject and understand its implications for the discipline today and its cultural context, **including historical cultural tensions**
- understand the need for an inclusive discipline and accord respect to diverse others within and beyond the subject
- demonstrate an openness to diverse discussions and debates in which their own opinions may be challenged by others
- apply their understanding to ethically and culturally responsible use of communication, media, film and cultural forms and technologies in both professional and everyday contexts.

Generic skills

4.5 On graduating with an honours degree in Communication, Media, Film and Cultural Studies, students should typically be able to:

- demonstrate the ability to select, evaluate and comment on reading, research and primary sources using appropriate referencing formats
- show the ability to devise, sustain and critique an argument, with some consideration of alternative views
- explain sometimes complex matters and ideas
- demonstrate an ability to solve problems, applying a range of methods and degree of creativity and open mindedness to do so
- present research findings clearly using a range of data visualisation and presentation techniques
- analyse, evaluate and interpret information and ideas using insights from relevant literature in the field

- communicate information, ideas, problems and solutions effectively verbally and/or non-verbally, electronically and in writing, showing sensitivity and openness to different ideas and approaches
- demonstrate competent numeracy and digital literacy skills
- make useful contributions to group discussions and collaborative projects, showing an ability to listen, and, where necessary, leadership skills
- manage their learning and work with minimal supervision, responding to specific briefs and deadlines
- demonstrate flexibility, initiative and/or personal responsibility/resilience
- demonstrate an ability to reflect on their work
- apply entrepreneurial skills, if and where appropriate, in dealing with audiences, users, clients, consumers, markets and sources.

Typical level

4.6 Graduates who have achieved the typical level in a course within the fields of Communication, Media, Film and Cultural Studies are able to demonstrate systematic subject-specific knowledge, understanding and skills, and competent mastery of general skills as defined below.

Subject-knowledge, understanding and skills

4.7 On graduating with an honours degree in Communication, Media, Film and Cultural Studies, students should typically be able to:

- demonstrate a comprehensive knowledge and solid understanding of key debates and theoretical perspectives in Communication, Media, Film and Cultural Studies, including those that extend beyond the Western canon
- demonstrate an ability to engage in the critical analysis of media texts, using theoretical material, concepts and understanding
- understand and interrogate the representational, technological and cultural significance of media, film, communication and cultural texts and contexts
- demonstrate an ability to understand and critique the representational, technological and cultural significance of media, film, communication and cultural texts and contexts
- critically assess the role of media forms, including community and participatory media, in contributing to political and cultural debates and the contestation of power

- consider the complex and intersecting ways in which diverse communities and organisations contribute to the development of media and cultural policies and practices
- critically engage with global issues, including sustainability practices and debates in relation to communication and cultural forms, **understanding the importance of media and communications in building coalitions of support for the transition to environmentally and socially sustainable societies**
- understand and apply understandings of communication technologies, practices and products not as 'neutral' but as developed and accessed in relation to their social, cultural, economic, historical, environmental and geographical contexts, **which have frequently been linked to injustice and inequality**
- **understand the risks of misinformation and the importance of truthfulness and recognising one's biases as a media and communication practitioner**
- understand and critically assess how different social groups and organisations interact, engage with and make use of various forms of media to communicate
- understand and critically assess diverse experiences and understandings of cultural value, including questions relating to how accounts of the world are created, maintained and reproduced, and how understandings of the self and the world are formed in relation to cultural texts and practices
- identify, critically evaluate and competently employ research methods suitable to a particular research context - these may include digital methodologies, close textual analysis, archive research, quantitative textual analysis and social research methods, research-by-practice, (auto)ethnography, critically reflective practice, audience research methods or participatory approaches
- be able to locate, retrieve, critically evaluate and synthesise a range of data, sources and conceptual frameworks appropriate to research, production and professional practice in the chosen area
- draw on the strengths and evaluate the limits of relevant quantitative and/or qualitative methods, and be able to independently apply this knowledge in their own work
- design, research and present to a high standard an extended piece of research or practical equivalent

- demonstrate and apply theoretical understandings in their critical engagement with cultural and production practices depending on the specific focus of their programme
- demonstrate a high standard of creative expression through practice depending on the specific focus of their programme
- be able to creatively and critically synthesise new knowledge and understanding and reflect on their own learning experiences and performance
- understand and critically reflect on different traditions and trajectories in the development of media, communication and/or film studies as a subject and understand their implications for the discipline today and its cultural context
- understand the need for an inclusive discipline and accord respect to diverse others within and beyond the subject
- demonstrate an ability to actively engage in diverse discussions and debates in which their own opinions may be challenged by others
- apply their understanding to ethically and culturally responsible use of communication, media, film and cultural forms and technologies in both professional and everyday contexts to a high standard.

Generic skills

4.8 On graduating with an honours degree in Communication, Media, Film and Cultural Studies, students should typically be able to:

- demonstrate a strong ability to select, critically evaluate and synthesise reading, research and primary sources using appropriate referencing formats
- show the ability to devise, sustain and critique an argument, including the evaluation of alternative views
- clearly explain complex concepts, theories and debates
- demonstrate a creative ability to solve problems, applying a range of methods to do so, and the ability to make decisions in complex and unpredictable circumstances
- present research findings clearly using a range of data visualisation and presentation techniques
- analyse, critically evaluate, synthesise and interpret information and ideas using insights from relevant literature in the field

- communicate information, ideas, problems and solutions verbally and/or non-verbally, electronically and in writing, with clear expression and style, showing sensitivity and openness to different ideas and approaches
- demonstrate competent numeracy and digital literacy skills
- consistently participate in group discussion and collaborative work, and make useful contributions to collaborative projects, showing an ability to listen, and, where necessary, leadership skills
- systematically manage their learning and work independently in response to specific briefs and deadlines
- consistently demonstrate flexibility, initiative and personal responsibility/resilience
- demonstrate an ability to reflect critically on their work
- apply a high level of entrepreneurial skills, if and where appropriate, in dealing with audiences, users, clients, consumers, markets and sources
- recognise the responsibility of media practitioners to critically examine power dynamics in representation and develop more inclusive and equitable communication approaches
- demonstrate understanding of how communication strategies can address social inequalities, promote cultural diversity, and support ethical engagement with varied communities and contexts
- demonstrate understanding of communication's role in promoting social equity, cultural diversity, and ethical representation.

Excellent level

Subject knowledge, understanding and skills

4.9 On graduating with an honours degree in Communication, Media, Film and Cultural Studies, students should typically be able to:

- demonstrate exceptional knowledge and understanding of key debates and theoretical perspectives in Communication, Media, Film and Cultural Studies, including those that extend beyond the Western canon
- demonstrate an exceptional ability to engage in the critical analysis of media texts, using theoretical material, concepts and understanding
- demonstrate an exceptional understanding of the representational, technological and cultural significance of media, film, communication and cultural texts and contexts

- critically assess to an exceptional level the role of media forms, including community and participatory media, in contributing to political and cultural debates and the contestation of power
- critically evaluate the complex and intersecting ways in which diverse communities and organisations contribute to the development of media and cultural policies and practices
- critically engage with global issues, including sustainability practices and debates in relation to communication and cultural forms, **recognising the critical role of media in effectively building coalitions of support for the transition to environmentally and socially sustainable societies and helping the public to have a sense of community ownership of sustainable infrastructure**
- understand and consistently apply understandings of communication technologies, practices and products not as 'neutral' but as developed and accessed in relation to their social, cultural, economic, historical, environmental and geographical contexts, **which have historically imbedded injustice and inequity and underrepresented certain groups**
- understand and critically assess to an exceptional level how different social groups and organisations interact, engage with, and make use of various forms of media to communicate
- understand and critically evaluate diverse experiences and understandings of cultural value, including questions relating to how accounts of the world are created, maintained and reproduced, and how understandings of the self and the world are formed in relation to cultural texts and practices
- identify, critically evaluate and competently employ research methods suitable to a particular research context - these may include digital methodologies, close textual analysis, archive research, quantitative textual analysis and social research methods, research-by-practice, (auto)ethnography, critically reflective practice, audience research methods or participatory approaches
- be able to locate, retrieve, critically evaluate and synthesise a range of data, sources and conceptual frameworks appropriate to research, production and professional practice in the chosen area
- draw on the strengths and evaluate the limits of relevant quantitative and/or qualitative methods, and be able to independently apply this knowledge in their own work with minimal or no supervision

- design, research and present to an exceptional standard, and in a perceptive manner, an extended piece of research or practical equivalent
- demonstrate and apply theoretical understandings consistently and convincingly in their critical engagement with cultural and production practices depending on the specific focus of their programme
- demonstrate an exceptional standard of creative expression and flair through practice depending on the specific focus of their programme
- be able to creatively and critically synthesise new knowledge and understanding and reflect critically on their own learning experiences and performance
- understand and critically reflect on different traditions and trajectories in the development of media, communication and/or film studies as a subject and understand their implications for the discipline today and its cultural context
- understand the need for an inclusive discipline and accord respect to diverse others within and beyond the subject
- demonstrate an exceptional ability to actively engage in diverse discussions and debates in which their own opinions may be challenged by others
- apply their understanding to ethically and culturally responsible use of communication, media, film and cultural forms and technologies in both professional and everyday contexts to an exceptional standards
- develop and implement interdisciplinary communication strategies that address socio-economic divides, promote cultural understanding, and support equity and inclusion across diverse contexts
- critically analyse media practices through social and environmental sustainability lenses including equity, ethics, cultural diversity, and ecological responsibility.

Generic skills

4.10 Graduates who have achieved the excellent level in a course within the fields of Communication, Media, Film and Cultural Studies are able to demonstrate a systematic subject-specific knowledge, understanding and skills, and exceptional mastery of general skills as defined below:

- consistently demonstrate an exceptional ability to select, consider, evaluate, comment on and synthesise a broad range of research, primary sources, views and information and integrate references
- show an exceptional ability to devise, sustain and critique an argument, including the evaluation of alternative views
- explain complex concepts, theories and debates in a sophisticated way and with critical insight
- demonstrate an exceptional creative ability to solve problems, applying a range of methods to do so
- present research findings using a range of data visualisation and presentation techniques
- analyse, critically evaluate, synthesise and interpret information and ideas to a consistently exceptional level using insights from relevant literature in the field
- communicate information, ideas, problems and solutions to an accomplished level verbally and/or non-verbally, electronically and in writing, with clear expression and style showing sensitivity and openness to different ideas and approaches
- demonstrate exceptional numeracy and digital literacy skills
- able to lead and participate in group discussions and make clear, authoritative and valuable contributions to collaborative projects, showing an exceptional ability to listen to the views of others
- consistently manage their learning and work independently in response to specific briefs and deadlines
- demonstrate exceptional initiative and personal responsibility and the ability to work autonomously
- demonstrate an exceptional ability to reflect on their work
- apply an exceptional level of entrepreneurial skills, if and where appropriate, in dealing with audiences, users, clients, consumers, markets and sources.

Master's level

4.11 Master's degrees in Communication, Media, Film and Cultural Studies have been at the centre of the discipline's historical development and continue to be a particularly significant level of study. While the flexibility of course formats and delivery has expanded, master's courses typically compare to undergraduate

programmes in terms of their relative intensity, complexity and density of study, in relation to advanced scholarly activity and/or advanced professional practice.

4.12 Students may enter master's courses in Communication, Media, Film and Cultural Studies from an honours degree in the same field as a way to further specialise or develop advanced skills, or from degrees in non-related fields as a conversion to develop a specialism in a Communication, Media, Film or Cultural Studies related subject.

4.13 Master's degrees are awarded to students who demonstrate systematic subject-specific knowledge, understanding and skills, and exceptional mastery of general skills as listed in the undergraduate standards but with the additional expectations that students demonstrate:

- understanding and awareness that is at, or informed by, the forefront of Communication, Media, Film and Cultural Studies academic research and/or professional practice
- originality in the application of knowledge, and practical understanding of how the boundaries of knowledge in the discipline are advanced through research
- understanding and enabling the critical evaluation of current research, research methodologies and advanced scholarship in the discipline
- development of their disciplinary knowledge and understanding, development of new skills to a high level.

5 List of references and further resources

BAFTA albert Education Partnership

<https://wearealbert.org/education-partnership/>

British Academy (2024) Media, Screen, Journalism and Communication Studies Provisions in UK Higher Education, available from May 2024 via:

www.thebritishacademy.ac.uk/policy-and-research/british-academy-shape-observatory/

QAA The UK Quality Code for Higher Education

www.qaa.ac.uk/the-quality-code

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

www.qaa.ac.uk/the-quality-code/enterprise-and-entrepreneurship-education

QAA (2024) Annex D in [The Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications of UK Degree-Awarding Bodies](#)

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

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

QAA (2022) Glossary

www.qaa.ac.uk/glossary

QAA, Quality Enhancement Framework (Scotland)

www.qaa.ac.uk/scotland/quality-enhancement-framework

QAA (2021) Quality Enhancement Review (Wales)

www.qaa.ac.uk/reviewing-higher-education/types-of-review/quality-enhancement-review

QAA (2023) *Reconsidering assessment for the ChatGPT era: QAA advice on developing sustainable assessment strategies*

www.qaa.ac.uk/docs/qaa/members/reconsidering-assessment-for-the-chat-gpt-era.pdf

QAA (2018) Quality Code Advice and Guidance

www.qaa.ac.uk/the-quality-code/advice-and-guidance

The Alliance for Sustainability Leadership in Education (EAUC)

www.eauc.org.uk/

United Nations, Sustainable Development Goals

<https://sdgs.un.org/goals>

UNESCO (2017) Education for Sustainable Development Goals: learning objectives

6 Membership of the Advisory Group

Membership of the Advisory Group for the Subject Benchmark Statement for Communication, Media, Film and Cultural Studies 2024

Professor Einar Thorsen (Chair)	Bournemouth University
Professor Jamie Medhurst (Deputy Chair)	Aberystwyth University
Dr Sorcha Ní Fhlainn (Deputy Chair)	Manchester Metropolitan University
Miss Toluwa Atilade	Bournemouth University
Professor Lucy Brown	London South Bank University
Dr Vincent Campbell	University of Leicester
Dr Neil Casey	QAA Officer
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Ms Kate Ironside	University of Northampton
Professor Sarah Jones	University of Gloucestershire
Professor Emily Keightley	Loughborough University
Ms Claire Lockwood	Nottingham Trent University
Ms Katy McDonald	Newcastle University
Professor Graham Meikle	University of Westminster
Professor Catriona Miller	Glasgow Caledonian University
Dr Chris Nunn	University of Birmingham
Professor Elizabeth Poole	Keele University
Amy Spencer	QAA Coordinator
Professor Kate Taylor-Jones	University of Sheffield
Dr Kerry Traynor	University of Liverpool
Dr Victoria Grace Walden	University of Sussex

Membership of the Advisory Group for the Subject Benchmark Statement for Communication, Media, Film And Cultural Studies 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 Communication, Media, Film and Cultural Studies from 2016.

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QAA

Membership of the Advisory Group for the Subject Benchmark Statement for Communication, Media, Film And Cultural Studies 2016

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

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