

Appendix 1

(N.B. Programme Specification not listed here are in other parts of this handbook)

PROGRAMME SPECIFICATION FOR M.Sc. IN APPLIED LINGUISTICS AND SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

1. Awarding institution/body	University of Oxford
2. Teaching institution	University of Oxford
3. Programme accredited by	N/A
4. Final award	M.Sc.
5. Programme	Applied Linguistics and Second Language Acquisition
6. UCAS code	N/A
7. Relevant subject benchmark statement	N/A
8. Date of programme specification	June 2008

9. Educational aims of the programme

- To provide students with the intellectual challenge of situating second language acquisition and language pedagogy firmly in an internationally recognised field of research, namely, Applied Linguistics.
- To develop critical analysis, problem solving skills and research skills.
- To encourage cross-fertilisation of knowledge and experience between English as a foreign language and other modern foreign languages.
- To encourage the interaction between students of language(s) and students who have, additionally, had the experience of teaching languages in a variety of educational contexts.
- To provide flexible learning routes, thereby making the above aims more realisable.
- To provide a complementary (but optional) module in English Language Teaching, for which a detailed transcript of the module and a university certificate of attendance will be provided.
- To provide a sound basis for further study in the field of SLA and Applied Linguistics and to encourage future applications for Higher Degrees leading to doctoral status.

10. Programme outcomes

Students will develop a knowledge and understanding of:

- The key theoretical principles and issues involved in the acquisition of a second language.
- The fundamental concepts, techniques, principles and theories of data collection and analysis in Applied Linguistics.
- A deep insight into how theories of second language acquisition relate to the practice of teaching in formal contexts.

- A highly detailed knowledge and understanding of a particular area of second language acquisition and its role in informing the practice of language teachers.
- The ethical and philosophical issues associated with research into teachers and learners of second languages.

Related teaching/learning methods and strategies

A combination of tutor presentations, small group work, student led presentations, classroom observation (actual and/or video), project work, tutorials. These different methods of programme delivery will integrate the two strands: second language acquisition analysis and methods in Applied Linguistics. However, an additional whole day session plus 6, 2-hour sessions will be dedicated to research methods in Applied Linguistics. Tutorials will enable students to identify research questions, select areas for literature review, carry out field work (if possible or applicable), and review drafts of the dissertation. Supported ICT sessions will be provided by Department staff and literature access skills (including electronic searches) will be provided by Department library staff.

Additionally, students will be able to attend any of the departmental, and many of the Applied Linguistics Research Area seminars which are held during the course of the year in order to broaden the scope of their learning and further situate it in an educational context.

Assessment

Summative assessment will be by end of module written assignments and production of a dissertation. The assignments will assess students' ability to discuss issues in second language acquisition using appropriate metalanguage, analyse and critique classroom practice, analyse and critique research articles both for their content and for the research methods therein, make links between theory and practice, solve problems, and draw implications for teaching in their own context (where applicable). The process and production of the dissertation will test the students' ability to work independently, to provide a rationale for their study, to reflect on multiple sources of evidence, to use appropriate research techniques, to analyse data, and to carry through a logical and coherent argument from formulation of research question(s) to conclusion. Formative assessment will include a 1500 word assignment during Michaelmas Term, set by course tutors and commented on by the student's supervisor. This assignment will not be formally examined. One of the assessed assignments relating to the modules in Michaelmas term will also be commented on by the student's supervisor in terms of: appropriate academic style; appropriate referencing; quality of English in broad terms.

B. Skills and other attributes

Students will have the opportunity to develop the following skills during the course:

I. Intellectual and Practical Skills

1. Critical analysis of both primary and secondary data
2. An ability to apply a cycle of reflective practice to their current or future teaching
3. Statistical analysis at a basic level
4. Classroom observation skills

5. Skills associated with techniques such as questionnaire design, task based self report, think aloud protocols
6. How to plan, conduct and report a programme of original research

Teaching/learning methods and strategies

See under A above

Assessment

See under A above

II. Transferable skills

Students will learn how to:

1. Communicate effectively
2. Present information via a data projector and interactive whiteboard
3. Improve their Information and Communication Technology competence
4. Work as a member of a team
5. Manage resources and time
6. Develop autonomous learning
7. Develop critical analysis

Teaching/learning methods and strategies

See under A above

Assessment

See under A above

12. Support for students and their learning

All students have access to a wide range of resources and facilities both within the Department of Education and in the University Computing Services. The Department of Education is able to offer excellent teaching accommodation, study and social provision, a common room, workspace in the resources unit which includes IT stations, complete access to the library, and two IT suites. Wireless internet access is available across the whole Department.

Students are able to attend a programme of research seminars given by visiting researchers throughout each term, and a range of other seminars in the Department of Education and across the University. There are excellent opportunities for contact and work with academic staff and other graduate students. The Departmental library is open until 7 p.m., and the computer room and common room facilities are available around the clock. All course materials are posted on WebLearn, the University Virtual Learning Environment, which also provides comprehensive facilities for online communications and social networking, as well as for the online storage of electronic data.

In addition to departmental provision, students have access to the first-rate library resources of the University including the Bodleian libraries. All students are able to use the extensive IT facilities at Oxford University Computing Services (OUCS) where the Learning Technologies Group is based. This includes free attendance on the IT training courses, access to computers 8.30 a.m. to 8.30 p.m., free email and web accounts, free advisory service, and a shop selling hardware and software.

The course director has overall responsibility for the course, co-ordinating teaching, and arranging specialist supervision for dissertation writing, in collaboration with the Department's Director of Graduate Studies. In addition, each student will have a University supervisor who provides academic guidance and oversees their progress. Within their college, each student has a college advisor who is responsible for their general welfare and is available to assist in any problems on the academic side. There is also a general Tutor for Graduates or Senior Tutor (in graduate colleges).

There are a number of schemes at college or university level offering financial support in cases of hardship.

The University runs a counselling service offering advice and support to all students.

13. Criteria for Admission

Candidates for admission should normally have a good upper second class degree, or its equivalent, in a subject which contains a substantial element of second language learning and/or linguistics. Candidates for whom English is a second language are required to obtain an overall score of 7.5, with at least 7.0 in each component in IELTS, or an overall score of 630 in TOEFL (plus a score of 5 in TWE); an overall score of 109 in the Internet-based TOEFL or Grade B in the Cambridge Certificate of Proficiency in English. In addition, candidates are expected to be practicing teachers in, or have an interest in teaching English, a foreign language, or English as a second language.

Applications will normally be considered in the light of a candidate's ability to meet the following criteria:

1. The applicant has provided appropriate indications of proven and potential academic excellence. Appropriate indicators may include two or more highly positive references, academic transcripts or their equivalent showing excellent achievement, samples of work produced by the student showing high levels of academic or scholarly ability, and good performance at interview.
2. The applicant has provided sufficient evidence, in the view of the assessors, to suggest that they have the academic ability and commitment to pursue the chosen programme to a successful conclusion within the required time limits.
3. The programme of study that the applicant wishes to pursue is well suited to the academic interests and abilities to which they have drawn attention in their application, and (where appropriate) the applicant has undertaken any preliminary work or course which is normally considered indispensable to acceptance on the proposed programme of study.

4. The Department is able to provide appropriate supervision and facilities for the candidate's programme of work.

14. Methods for evaluating and improving the quality and standards of learning

- There is annual evaluation of the course and performance of students in assessments and the dissertation by a board of examiners. Examiners' reports (both internal and external) are required each year for submission to the Department of Education Departmental Board, the Social Sciences Board, and the Educational Policy and Standards Committee (EPSC) of the University. The department is required to report steps that will be taken to address any particular issues identified. In addition, there are periodic major reviews of courses and departmental provision including a review after five years of all new graduate courses by the University's EPSC and the Social Sciences Board.
- Any changes to the programme agreed by the department have to be reviewed and approved by the Social Sciences Board and the EPSC.
- Annual staff appraisal, and reports on staff in their initial period of office, includes assessment of teaching. Training courses in e.g. supervision are offered by the University's Institute for the Advancement of University Learning (IAUL).
- Student feedback on the course will take the form of written evaluations of the modules by all students, and by regular meetings between a student liaison committee of student representatives and the course development committee (consisting of the course director and other key academic staff).

15. Regulation of assessment

The examinations are under the supervision of the Departmental Board of the Department of Education, which, with the concurrence of the Social Sciences Board, is responsible for approving examining conventions. A Nominating Committee proposes the names of examiners for approval by the Vice-Chancellor and Proctors. It is the examiners' responsibility to appoint appropriate assessors for any component of the examination requiring specialist expertise outwith that of the examiners.

All written assignments and the dissertation are subjected initially to blind double marking.

Examiners and assessors then compare their respective marks and come to an agreed mark for each assignment and dissertation. When a disagreement between the two examiners cannot be resolved, it is the responsibility of the external examiner to mark a third time to resolve the differences. The examiners may award a distinction for excellence in the whole examination. The eight Core Modules have equal weight, and assignments are marked using the University's standard numerical scale.

Internal and external examiners will be required to produce reports after the examinations for consideration by the Departmental Board, the Social Sciences Board, and the EPSC.

External examiners act as moderators, providing informed comment on two major issues:

1. to verify that standards are appropriate to the award, in part by comparison with the standards of comparable institutions, and to ensure that the assessment procedures and the regulations governing them are fair and otherwise appropriate.
2. To ensure that the conduct of the examination and the determination of awards have been fairly conducted, and that individual student performance has been judged in accordance with the regulations and conventions of the Examining Board.

External examiners are expected to report to the Vice-Chancellor in each year in which they act. Their reports are expected to cover the following points:

- the standards demonstrated by the students
- the extent to which standards are appropriate for the award
- the design, structure, and marking of assignments
- the procedures for assessment
- whether or not external examiners have had sufficient access to, and the power to call upon, any material necessary to make the required judgments
- students' performance in relation to their peers in comparable courses
- the coherence of the policies and procedures relating to external examiners and their consonance with the explicit roles required of them
- the basis and rationale for any comparisons made
- the strengths and weaknesses of the students as a cohort
- the quality of teaching and learning which may be indicated by student performance

The report is addressed to the Vice-Chancellor, and will be considered by the Social Sciences Board and the Educational Policy and Standards Committee of the University.

The report will also be scrutinised by the Departmental Board of the Department of Educational Studies, by the Board of Examiners, and more widely within the department.

16. Indicators of quality and standards

This course has been running since 2002 and has been subject to a formal external review. Issues of quality and standards will be addressed in both internal and external examiners' reports on an annual basis. It will be thoroughly reviewed after 5 years and thereafter will be part of the periodic major reviews conducted by the University's EPSC and Social Sciences Board.

The course will be under the aegis of the Department of Educational Studies, which achieved a rating of 5 in the 2001 Research Assessment Exercise. The department also has ESRC postgraduate training (1+3) recognition for both full-time and part-time modes, and its teacher training was considered 'very good with several outstanding features' in the report of OfSTED in 2001.