



Subject Benchmark Statement

**Communication, Media, Film and Cultural Studies:
Draft for consultation**

April 2016

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How can I use this document?

This document is a 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.

You may want to read this document if you are:

- involved in the design, delivery and review of programmes of study in Media, Film and Cultural Studies or related subjects
- a prospective student thinking about studying Communication, Media, Film and Cultural Studies, or a current student of the subject, to find out what may be involved
- an employer, to find out about the knowledge and skills generally expected of a graduate in Communication, Media, Film and Cultural Studies.

Explanations of unfamiliar terms used in this Subject Benchmark Statement can be found in the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education's (QAA's) glossary.¹

¹ The QAA glossary is available at: www.qaa.ac.uk/about-us/glossary.

About Subject Benchmark Statements

Subject Benchmark Statements form part of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (Quality Code) which sets out the Expectations that all providers of UK higher education reviewed by QAA are required to meet.² They are a component of Part A: Setting and Maintaining Academic Standards, which includes the Expectation that higher education providers 'consider and take account of relevant Subject Benchmark Statements' in order to secure threshold academic standards.³

Subject Benchmark Statements describe the nature of study and the academic standards expected of graduates in specific subject areas, and in respect of particular qualifications. They provide a picture of what graduates in a particular subject might reasonably be expected to know, do and understand at the end of their programme of study.

Subject Benchmark Statements are used as reference points in the design, delivery and review of academic programmes. They provide general guidance for articulating the learning outcomes associated with the programme but are not intended to represent a national curriculum in a subject or to prescribe set approaches to teaching, learning or assessment. Instead, they allow for flexibility and innovation in programme design within a framework agreed by the subject community. Further guidance about programme design, development and approval, learning and teaching, assessment of students, and programme monitoring and review is available in Part B: Assuring and Enhancing Academic Quality of the Quality Code in the following Chapters:⁴

- *Chapter B1: Programme Design, Development and Approval*
- *Chapter B3: Learning and Teaching*
- *Chapter B6: Assessment of Students and the Recognition of Prior Learning*
- *Chapter B8: Programme Monitoring and Review.*

For some subject areas, higher education providers may need to consider other reference points in addition to the Subject Benchmark Statement in designing, delivering and reviewing programmes. These may include requirements set out by professional, statutory and regulatory bodies, national occupational standards and industry or employer expectations. In such cases, the Subject Benchmark Statement may provide additional guidance around academic standards not covered by these requirements.⁵ The relationship between academic and professional or regulatory requirements is made clear within individual statements, but it is the responsibility of individual higher education providers to decide how they use this information. The responsibility for academic standards remains with the higher education provider who awards the degree.

Subject Benchmark Statements are written and maintained by subject specialists drawn from and acting on behalf of the subject community. The process is facilitated by QAA. In order to ensure the continuing currency of Subject Benchmark Statements, QAA initiates regular reviews of their content, five years after first publication, and every seven years subsequently.

² The Quality Code, available at www.qaa.ac.uk/assuring-standards-and-quality/the-quality-code, aligns with the *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area*, available at: www.enqa.eu/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/ESG_endorsed-with-changed-foreword.pdf.

³ Part A: Setting and Maintaining Academic Standards, available at: www.qaa.ac.uk/assuring-standards-and-quality/the-quality-code/quality-code-part-a.

⁴ Individual Chapters are available at: www.qaa.ac.uk/assuring-standards-and-quality/the-quality-code/quality-code-part-b.

⁵ See further Part A: Setting and Maintaining Academic Standards, available at: www.qaa.ac.uk/assuring-standards-and-quality/the-quality-code/quality-code-part-a.

Relationship to legislation

Higher education providers are responsible for meeting the requirements of legislation and any other regulatory requirements placed upon them, for example by funding bodies. The Quality Code does not interpret legislation nor does it incorporate statutory or regulatory requirements. Sources of information about other requirements and examples of guidance and good practice are signposted within the Subject Benchmark Statement where appropriate. Higher education providers are responsible for how they use these resources.⁶

Equality and diversity

The Quality Code embeds consideration of equality and diversity matters throughout. Promoting equality involves treating everyone with equal dignity and worth, while also raising aspirations and supporting achievement for people with diverse requirements, entitlements and backgrounds. An inclusive environment for learning anticipates the varied requirements of learners, and aims to ensure that all students have equal access to educational opportunities. Higher education providers, staff and students all have a role in, and a responsibility for, promoting equality.

Equality of opportunity involves enabling access for people who have differing individual requirements as well as eliminating arbitrary and unnecessary barriers to learning. In addition, disabled students and non-disabled students are offered learning opportunities that are equally accessible to them, by means of inclusive design wherever possible and by means of reasonable individual adjustments wherever necessary.

⁶ See further the *UK Quality Code for Higher Education: General Introduction*, available at: www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/information-and-guidance/publication?PubID=181.

About this Subject Benchmark Statement

This Subject Benchmark Statement refers to bachelor's degrees with honours in the subject areas of Communication, Media, Film and Cultural Studies.⁷

This version of the statement forms its third edition, following initial publication of the Subject Benchmark Statement in 2002 and review and revision in 2008.⁸

Note on alignment with higher education sector coding systems

Programmes of study which use this Subject Benchmark Statement as a reference point are generally classified under the following codes in the Joint Academic Coding System (JACS).⁹

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| P000 | (Mass communication & documentation) |
| P200 | (Publicity studies) |
| P210 | (Public relations) |
| P300 | (Media studies) |
| P301 | (Television studies) |
| P302 | (Radio studies) |
| P303 | (Film studies) |
| P304 | (Electronic and media studies) |
| P310 | (Media production) |
| P311 | (Television production) |
| P312 | (Radio production) |
| P313 | (Film production) |
| P390 | (Media studies not elsewhere classified) |
| P400 | (Publishing) |
| P410 | (Electronic publishing) |
| P411 | (Publishing on audio/video tape) |
| P412 | (Publishing on CD ROM) |
| P413 | (Publishing via the World Wide Web) |
| P420 | (Multimedia publishing) |
| P430 | (Interactive publishing) |
| P490 | (Publishing not elsewhere classified) |
| P500 | (Journalism) |
| P510 | (Factual reporting) |
| P590 | (Journalism not elsewhere classified) |
| P900 | (Others in mass communications and documentation) |
| W612 | (Producing motion pictures) |
| W613 | (Film and sound recording). |

This list for illustrative purposes only, to show the type of degrees referred to in this Subject Benchmark Statement at the time of publication.

⁷ Bachelor's degrees are at level 6 in *The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* and level 10 in *The Framework for Qualifications of Higher Education Institutions in Scotland*, as published in *The Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications of UK Degree-Awarding Bodies*, available at: www.qaa.ac.uk/assuring-standards-and-quality/the-quality-code/qualifications.

⁸ Further information is available in the *Recognition scheme for Subject Benchmark Statements*, available at: www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/information-and-guidance/publication?PubID=190.

⁹ Further information about JACS is available at: www.hesa.ac.uk/content/view/1776/649.

Summary of changes from the previous Subject Benchmark Statement

After careful consideration and discussion the review panel took the view that the 2008 Subject Benchmark Statement was largely fit for purpose and needed little amendment. The opportunity was taken to make a few minor changes. These included: some simplification and clarification of language and explanation; incorporation of adjustments due to changes in curricula and the nature of the communications media including, but not only, the continuing growth of forms of digital production and distribution; improved recognition of some aspects of teaching and learning in these fields including historical dimensions, production practices, and relationships to wider social, economic, and political processes, adaptation to the generic format for statements required by the QAA; recognition of the range and diversity of provision in the fields covered by the Subject Benchmark Statement.

1 Introduction

1.1 Social life depends upon the constant development and varied use of modes of communication and upon shared and contested understandings of the world. Consequently, it requires the systematic study of communication, media, film and culture in national and global contexts. Degree programmes in Communication, Media, Film and Cultural Studies seek to understand the role of symbolic structures in societies, and the means by which they are produced, distributed and consumed.

1.2 These programmes 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, business, computing and advanced technologies.

1.3 Much of this work has involved the development, application and articulation of the complexity of these fields of study, and concepts and theories have drawn on:

- the ways in which accounts of the world are created and by whom, and how they mediate symbolically between the individual and society (questions of 'representation')
- the ways in which cultural and media organisations intersect with political and economic processes (questions of 'political economy', or 'policy')
- the ways in which questions of creative and cultural value are experienced and understood (questions of 'aesthetics')
- the ways in which social interactions may operate through circulating meanings and systems of representations (questions of 'discourse' and 'mediation')
- the ways in which creative artefacts are originated, realised and distributed, and the extent to which these processes have changed and continue to change (questions of 'production' and 'distribution')
- the ways in which people appropriate and use cultural texts and practices (questions of 'consumption' and 'reception')
- the ways in which understandings of self and the world maybe formed in relation to such texts and practices (questions of 'identity')
- the relations between systems of meanings in structures to power and inequality (questions of 'ideology').

1.4 Degree programmes in Communication, Media, Film and Cultural Studies are characterised by a diversity of emphases, drawing in different ways on the disciplinary and professional sources outlined above, and offering a range of approaches to theoretical, critical, practical, and creative work within these fields. Often combining the search for rigorous knowledge and understanding with the development of students' creative and reflexive capacities in innovative ways, they offer programmes relevant to students' futures both in work and as citizens. The benchmarking review group for Communication, Media, Film and Cultural Studies has sought to reflect in this Statement both the central concerns and understandings common to these fields and the richness represented by their diversity.

1.5 As an interdisciplinary group itself, the benchmarking group has also been aware of the overlap of disciplinary boundaries between its work and that of colleagues in fields including the arts, humanities, social sciences and other areas such as, computer studies and performing arts. We expect that some degree programmes may wish to draw on benchmark statements from these and other subject groups, as appropriate, in drawing up their degree programme specifications. Some degree programmes may also wish to introduce students to the codes and standards produced by relevant professional bodies.

1.6 The focus of this Statement is on the single honours degree programme. We recognise, however, that Communication, Media, Film and Cultural Studies may also be found in combined and joint honours degree programmes. Just as single honours programmes in these fields will combine, in different ways, components from other statements, we expect that combined and joint honours programmes will draw from them as appropriate.

1.7 We see the primary function of the Statement as enabling, rather than regulatory. We have sought to provide a framework for undergraduate degree programmes in these fields, within which individual departments, or subject teams, can recognise themselves and their students, and within which they will be able to continue to develop. Such continued development and diversity of practice is central to these fields and to the development of their students' potential.

2 Range and diversity of Communication, Media, Film and Cultural Studies

2.1 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 social and economic, political, psychological and social life. Within these fields, degree programmes are characterised by a diversity of emphases. Titles may include, for example, advertising, broadcasting; communication studies; cultural studies; digital, film or screen studies; interactive media, journalism; media production; media studies; publishing and public relations. Programmes may focus on the social, the contemporary, the aesthetic, the historical, the technological, the practical production aspects of these forms, or a combination of them.

- Some range across the general areas of culture and/or communications and media, while others focus on a particular practice such as advertising, film, screen studies or journalism.
- Some pay particular attention to the practical and technological aspects of communication, media and cultural technologies; others focus on their economic or business applications, their industrial and management structures and methods, their social uses, and/or their symbolic, aesthetic or affective possibilities.
- Some degree programmes give greater significance to historical dimensions, while others emphasise contemporary and emerging developments.
- 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 or cultural systems.
- Some focus primarily on professional practices and their associated creative, commercial management, 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 means to critical reflection.

2.2 Nevertheless, degree programmes within Communication, Media, Film and Cultural Studies share the broad aim of producing graduates who have an informed, critical and creative approach to these areas.

2.3 In furthering students' academic and personal development, programmes within Communication, Media, Film and Cultural Studies are committed to developing critical and creative independence, flexibility, reflexivity, across individual and group work, and in critical and production work.

3 Nature and scope of Communication, Media, Film and Cultural Studies

3.1 For all their range and diversity, work in the fields of Communication, Media, Film and Cultural Studies is linked by a shared recognition of a number of propositions.

3.2 Degree programmes in Communication, Media, Film and Cultural Studies vary in the emphasis given to these concerns. These differences of focus will draw in different degrees from a variety of sources and practices. These are:

- people's lives, are shaped in part by a great variety of communicative, cultural and aesthetic 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 psychological life, offering a range of aesthetic pleasures and social engagements, and providing central resources for the formation and expression of personal and collective identities
- communications, media 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, 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
- skills understanding and knowledge in these areas are transferable to any sector
- the theories and research methodologies developed within the arts and humanities
- the theories and research methodologies developed within the social sciences
- the theories and research methodologies of applied arts and sciences
- the concepts, competencies and knowledge developed within the major areas of creative and professional practice in the cultural, film, media and communications industries.

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

3.4 No degree programme gives equal attention to all these elements. Most programmes, however, promote a combination of understandings 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, programmes 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 cultural, economic, ethical, legal, political, social or affective, which shape working environments.

4 Knowledge, understanding and skills

4.1 As programmes differ in their focus and degree of specialisation it is neither possible nor desirable to define a prescriptive knowledge or skills base. The following sections give an indication of the areas of knowledge, the subject specific and generic skills which will be appropriate within these fields of study; they are not intended as a checklist.

Communications, culture and society

4.2 Graduates of programmes in these fields demonstrate knowledge and understanding of some of the following:

- i the roles of communication systems, modes of representations and systems of meaning in the ordering of societies
- ii economic forces that frame the media, film, cultural and creative industries, and the role of such industries in contemporary political and cultural life
- iii the roles that media, film and cultural institutions play in different societies
- iv the roles of cultural practices and institutions in society
- v particular media forms and genres, and the way in which they organise understandings, meanings and affects
- vi the role of changing technology, including emergent digital technologies, in media production, content manipulation, distribution, access and participation.
- vii the diverse modes of reception and use of media technologies and contents
- viii the ways in which participatory access to the central sites of public culture and communication is distributed along axes of social division, such as disability, class, ethnicity, gender, religion, age, location, nationality, and sexuality
- ix the dynamics of public and everyday discourses in the shaping of culture and society
- x the ways in which different social groups may make use of cultural texts and products in the construction of social and cultural realities, cultural maps and frames of reference.

Histories

4.3 Graduates of programmes in these fields demonstrate knowledge and understanding of some of the following:

- i contribution of media organisations to the shaping of modernities
- ii the development of media and cultural forms in a local, regional, national, international or global context
- iii the social, cultural economic, and political histories from which different media, film and cultural institutions, modes of communication, practices and structures have emerged
- iv the interconnectedness of texts and contexts, and of the shifting configurations of communicative, cultural and aesthetic practices and systems
- v the historical evolution of particular genres, aesthetic traditions and forms, and of their current characteristics and possible future developments
- vi the history of communication, film and media technologies, and a recognition of the different ways in which the history of, and current developments in, media and communication can be understood in relation to technological change
- vii the interrelationships of technological and social change
- viii the historical development of practices of cultural consumption and everyday lived practices including subcultural forms the ways in which relevant theories and concepts have developed within particular historical contexts texts.

Processes and Practices

4.4 Graduates of programmes in these fields demonstrate knowledge and understanding of some of the following:

- i the processes linking pre-production, production, distribution, circulation, reception and use
- ii the ways in which individuals and groups express their identity and communicate such identities culturally
- iii the processes of cultural and subcultural formations and their dynamics
- iv key production processes and professional practices relevant to media, film, cultural and communicative industries, and of ways of conceptualising creativity and authorship
- v professional and occupational codes and practices in cultural production, distribution and reception.
- vi the legal, ethical and other regulatory frameworks that are relevant to media and cultural production, manipulation, distribution, circulation, and reception
- vii how media, film, cultural and creative organisations operate, communicate and are managed
- viii how in creative industries individuals, or collaborative teams, are and how they work
- ix the material conditions of media and cultural consumption, and of the cultural contexts in which people appropriate, use and make sense of media and cultural products
- x how media products and platforms might be understood within broader concepts of culture
- xi the ways in which data is stored, organised and used and the social and political implications thereof.

Forms and aesthetics

4.5 Graduates of programmes in these fields demonstrate knowledge and understanding of some of the following:

- i the aesthetic and formal qualities at play, and their relation to meanings, in particular cultural forms
- ii an insight into the cultural and social ways in which aesthetic judgements are constructed and aesthetic processes experienced
- iii creative processes and practice through engagement in one or more production practices
- iv an examination of the role that aesthetic and other pleasures and judgements may play in the production and maintenance of social relations
- v an appreciation of the production and reception of a range of aesthetic pleasures associated with cultural, film and media products
- vi the narrative processes, generic forms and modes of representation at work in media and cultural texts
- vii the ways in which specific media and their attendant technologies make possible different kinds of aesthetic effects and forms
- viii of the audio, visual and verbal conventions through which sounds, images and words make meaning
- ix the ways in which people engage with cultural texts and practices.

Culture and identity

4.6 Graduates of programmes in these fields demonstrate knowledge and understanding of some of the following:

- i the complexity of the term 'culture' and an understanding of how it has developed
- ii the ways in which identities are constructed and contested through engagements with culture
- iii how disability, class, ethnicity, gender, religion, nationality, sexuality, and other social divisions play key roles in terms of both access to the media and modes of representation in media texts
- iv the different modes of global, international, national and local cultural experience and their interaction in particular instances
- v the ways in which forms of media and cultural consumption are embedded in everyday life, and serve as ways of claiming and understanding identities.

5 Subject-specific skills

5.1 The specific focus and breadth of range of individual degree programmes determines not only the knowledge bases on which they draw, but also the balance of skills and approaches developed within them. Graduates will demonstrate, as appropriate, some of the following subject-specific skills:

Critical analysis

5.2 Graduates demonstrate the ability to:

- i engage critically with major thinkers and debates within the field putting them to productive use
- ii 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 and technological change
- iii comprehend how different social groups variously make use of, and engage with, forms of communication, media and culture
- iv make critical judgements in the understanding and evaluation of these forms
- v consider and evaluate their own work in a reflexive manner, with reference to academic and/or professional conventions, issues and debates.

Research

5.3 Graduates demonstrate the ability to:

- i carry out various forms of research for essays, projects, creative productions or dissertations involving sustained independent and critical enquiry
- ii formulate appropriate research questions and employ appropriate methods and resources for exploring those questions
- iii locate, retrieve, evaluate and draw upon the range of sources and the conceptual frameworks appropriate to research in the chosen area
- iv draw on the strengths and understand the limits of the major quantitative and/or qualitative research methods, and be able to apply this knowledge critically in their own work
- v draw on and evaluate and apply research enabled by established and emergent technologies
- vi draw and reflect upon the relevance and impact of their own cultural commitments and positioning to the practice of research
- vii collate, critically evaluate and understand a variety of research material within and beyond academic literature.

Production or practice

5.4 Graduates demonstrate the ability to:

- i produce work that uses the effective manipulation of one or more of sound, images, and the written word including understanding relevant industry standards and how they are defined and achieved
understand the importance of the commissioning and funding structures of the creative industries and demonstrate a capacity to work within the constraints imposed by them
- ii initiate, develop and realise distinctive and creative work within various forms of writing or of aural, visual, audiovisual, sound or other electronic and digital media.

- iii experiment, as appropriate, with forms, conventions, languages, techniques and practices
- iv employ production skills and practices to challenge or advance existing forms and conventions and to innovate
- v draw upon and bring together ideas from different sources of knowledge and from different academic disciplines
- vi be adaptable, creative and self-reflexive in producing output for a variety of audiences and in a variety of media.

Citizenship

5.5 Graduates demonstrate the ability to:

- i critically appraise public debate relevant to communications, media, film and culture
- ii analyse how media and cultural policies are devised and implemented, both nationally and internationally, and the ways in which citizens and diverse communities, as well as organisations do, or can play a part in shaping them
- iii analyse the role which community and participatory media forms do or can play in contributing to cultural debates and the contesting of power
- iv understand the range of attitudes and values arising from the complexity and diversity of contemporary communications, media, film, culture and society.

Generic skills

5.6 Graduates demonstrate the ability to:

- i work in flexible, creative and independent ways, showing self-discipline, self-direction and reflexivity
- ii collate, organise and deploy ideas and information in order to formulate arguments cogently, and express them effectively in written, oral or other forms
- iii retrieve and generate information, and evaluate sources, in carrying out independent research
- iv organise and manage supervised, self-directed projects
- v communicate effectively in interpersonal settings, in writing and in a variety of media
- vi work productively in a group or team, showing abilities at different times to listen, contribute and also to lead effectively
- vii 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
- viii apply entrepreneurial skills if and where appropriate in dealing with audiences, clients, consumers, markets, sources and/or users
- ix use a variety of computer-based skills ranging from basic competences such as data analysis to web-based technology and digital multimedia
- x develop, as appropriate, specific proficiencies in using a range of current and emergent media technologies
- xi research and identify possible employment destinations.

6 Teaching, learning and assessment

6.1 Individual programmes within the fields of Communication, Media, Film and Cultural Studies will 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 will be designed to reflect the specific aims, emphases and learning outcomes of the programme, and students should be made aware of these at the outset.

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

6.3 Throughout, learning strategies will acknowledge, respect and encourage a wide variety of learning styles and activities, offering a balance between the provision of information (direct or resource-based) and opportunities for active assimilation, application, questioning, debate and critical reflection.

6.4 Progression through programmes lead 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 strategies promotes 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 experience:** the process through which a student acquire practical experience, skills and the opportunity for creative expression and/or thinking in a range of activities, from empirical research to production work.
- **critical reflection:** the processes through which students acquire and reflect on new knowledge and understanding, and on their own learning experiences and performance.

6.5 Learning and teaching methods reflect the specific aims, emphases and learning outcomes of the degree programme, and will provide an appropriate balance from among the following:

- lectures; demonstrations; screenings; seminars; workshops; work simulations; tutorials; group and individual project work; live projects; supervised independent learning; open and resource-based learning; e-learning, production practice; and work placements or similar
- large and small group, and individual learning and teaching situations
- tutor-led, student-led and independent learning sessions
- use of a range of technological systems for accessing data, resources, contacts and literature, and for the effective acquisition of production skills.

6.6 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.

Assessment

6.7 Assessment is an integral part of the learning process, and is formative and diagnostic as well as summative and evaluative, providing feedback to students wherever appropriate. In many programmes, particularly those that feature production work, students will be participants in the assessment process through strategies such as group critiques, where students present and discuss their work with peers and tutors.

6.8 Assessment strategies follow the specific aims, emphases and learning outcomes of the degree programme, and reflect the range and balance of teaching and learning methods used. They are appropriate to the learning processes and intended learning outcomes. Programmes 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.

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

- short and long essays
- analyses of textual and cultural forms and practices
- reviews and reports including those from work placements or simulated work environments
- seen and unseen examinations
- individual and group presentations (whether oral and/or technology-based)
- critical self and peer-evaluation
- role analyses/evaluations
- logbooks, diaries and autobiographical writing
- individual or group portfolios of work (whether critical, creative or reflexive, relating to the outcome of professional practice)
- group and individually produced artefacts, including productions in sound, audio-visual or other media individual and group project reports
- research exercises
- tasks aimed at the assessment of specific skills (for example computer-based, production, research, and skills of application).

6.10 Programmes may also require the production of an extended piece of independent investigation and/or a creative production or portfolio of work, 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.

6.11 Overall, assessment focuses on the following areas:

- breadth and depth of subject knowledge and understanding
- awareness of the history and context(s) of that knowledge
- critical analysis, whether of texts, fields of knowledge, concepts or cultural or production practices, including the ability to contextualise the analysis and engage in critical debates through discursive argument

- subject-specific and generic skills, including skills of investigation and enquiry, oral and written communicative skills, the use of a range of digital systems for accessing data, resources, contacts and literature, and media production skills and creativity
- critical reflection on issues of practice, on new knowledge and understandings, and on students' own and others' performance against agreed criteria, including the capacity to deploy and evaluate evidence and to express the outcomes of such reflection clearly and fluently
- in the case of production work, assessment criteria will reflect the specific brief and the overall aims of the programme, and a recognition of relevant professional standards, where appropriate.

7 Benchmark standards

The threshold level

7.1 Graduates who have achieved the threshold level in a programme within the fields of Communication, Media, Film and Cultural Studies will be able to demonstrate sufficient grounding overall in the knowledge outlined in Sections 2 and 3, and in the subject-specific and general skills as defined in Sections 4, 5 and 6, as emphasised by their particular programme.

The typical level

7.2 Graduates who achieve the typical level within the fields of Communication, Media, Film and Cultural Studies will be able to demonstrate systematic knowledge and understanding of the subject and field as outlined in Sections 2 and 3, and subject-specific and general skills as defined in Sections 4 and 5, as emphasised by their particular programme. They will have demonstrated strengths from among the outcomes listed in Section 7.3. Their performance will be characterised by a more consistent level of achievement, a greater ability to synthesise and make links between a range of knowledge applications and skills, and a greater self-reflexivity and awareness of the limits, ambiguities and uncertainties of contemporary knowledge.

Outcomes

7.3 We have emphasised that the fields embraced under Communication, Media, Film and Cultural Studies are very broad so that no degree programme can include all of these elements. Furthermore, individual programmes vary in the degree of focus or breadth of range they adopt. In general, it may be expected that programmes working with a tighter focus will require greater intensity of knowledge, understanding and skills within their specific field, drawing as appropriate on those outlined in Sections 4 and 5. Programmes that adopt a broader focus will draw more widely on these sections, emphasising interconnections and/or interdisciplinary. However, graduates within these fields display:

- i coherent knowledge of the communication, media, film and cultural forms and processes chosen for study within their degree programme
- ii understanding of a range of concepts, theories and approaches appropriate to the study of those objects and processes, and the capacity to apply these
- iii skills in critical analysis, research, production and communication appropriate to the learning tasks set by their programme, as well as an array of generic and creative skills.

7.4 Within this general rubric, individual programmes combine in different ways components from the following. Individual programmes can build coherent sets of expectations from among them, with appropriately different emphases. The learning outcomes are indicative, and do not in any sense constitute a checklist.

7.5 Graduates from programmes in Communication, Media, Film and Cultural Studies will have:

- i knowledge of the central role that communications, media, film and cultural agencies play at local, national, international and global levels of economic, political and social organisation, along with the ability to explore and articulate the implications of this
- ii awareness of the history and context of their particular objects of study
- iii knowledge of appropriate research practices, procedures and traditions, and some awareness of their strengths and limitations
- iv awareness of the diversity of approaches to understanding communication, media, film and culture in both historical and contemporary contexts, and of the uses and implications of these approaches
- v knowledge of a range of texts, genres, aesthetic forms and cultural practices, and the ability to produce close and informed analysis of these
- vi engagement with forms of critical analysis, argument and debate, expressed through an appropriate command of oral, written and other forms of communication
- vii understanding of production processes and professional practices within media, cultural and communicative industries
- viii critically informed competencies in the management and operation of production technologies, procedures and processes
- ix the ability to engage with and to advance creative processes in one or more forms of media or cultural production
- x knowledge of a range of communicative situations and cultural practices, along with the ability to produce detailed analyses of these, and to make comparisons and connections
- xi the ability to consider views other than their own, and exercise a degree of independent and informed critical judgement in analysis
- xii the ability to work across a variety of group and independent modes of study, and within these to demonstrate flexibility, creativity and the capacity for critical self-reflection
- xiii the ability to use their knowledge and understanding of communication, cultural and media processes as a basis for the examination of policy and ethical issues, and intervention whether in the public domain or in other aspects of democratic participation and citizenship.

Appendix 1: Membership of the benchmarking and review groups for the Subject Benchmark Statement for Communication, Media, Film and Cultural Studies

Membership of the review group for the Subject Benchmark Statement for Communication, Media, Film and Cultural Studies (2015)

| | |
|---------------------------------|--|
| Dr James Bennett | Royal Holloway University of London |
| Professor Anita Biressi | University of Roehampton |
| Dr Kathryn Burnett | University of the West of Scotland |
| Mr Jim Curran | Ulster University |
| Professor Natalie Fenton | Goldsmiths University of London and Chair Media, Communication and Cultural Studies Association (MeCCSA) |
| Professor Chris Frost | Association for Journalism Education UK |
| Professor Peter Golding (Chair) | Media, Communication and Cultural Studies Association (MeCCSA) and Northumbria University |
| Mr Roy Hanney | Southampton Solent University |
| Professor Justin Lewis | Cardiff University |
| Dr Alon Lischinsky | Oxford Brookes University |
| Professor Peter Lunt | University of Leicester |
| Dr Eben Muse | Bangor University |
| Professor Tim O'Sullivan | De Montfort University |
| Professor Phill Powrie | British Association of Film, Television and Screen Studies |

By correspondence:

| | |
|----------------|----------------------------|
| Dr Sian Barber | Queen's University Belfast |
|----------------|----------------------------|

Subject association:

| | |
|---------------------|---|
| Mr Jon Godel | Broadcast Journalism Training Council (BJTC) |
| Mr Mark Trompeteler | British Kinematograph Sound and Television Society (BKSTS) |

Student reader:

| | |
|--------------------|--------------------|
| Mr Chris McSweeney | Cardiff University |
|--------------------|--------------------|

QAA officer:

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| Ruth Burchell | Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education |
|---------------|---|

Employers were represented through an employer consultative group.

Membership of the review group for the Subject Benchmark Statement for Communication, Media, Film and Cultural Studies (2008)

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

| | |
|--------------------------------|--|
| Dr Anita Biressi | Roehampton University |
| Mr David Clews | The Higher Education Academy Art, Design and Media Subject Centre |
| Professor John Ellis | Royal Holloway, University of London |
| Professor Christine Geraghty | University of Glasgow |
| Mr Roy Hanney | The University of Chichester |
| Mr Stephen Malinder | The Higher Education Academy Art, Design and Media Subject Centre |
| Professor Tim O'Sullivan | De Montfort University |
| Professor Sue Thornham (Chair) | University of Sussex |

Membership of the original benchmark statement group for Communication, Media, Film and Cultural Studies (2002)

Details below are as published in the original Subject Benchmark Statement

| | |
|--------------------------------|---|
| Professor Rod Allen | City University |
| Professor Martin Barker | University of Wales, Aberystwyth |
| Dr Raymond Boyle | University of Stirling |
| Ms Rosalind Brunt | Sheffield Hallam University |
| Dr Bernadette Casey | College of St Mark and St John, Plymouth |
| Professor Ron Cook | University of Salford |
| Ms Sarah Edge | University of Ulster |
| Ms Christine Geraghty | Goldsmiths College |
| Mr Michael Green | University of Birmingham |
| Dr Karen Lury | University of Glasgow |
| Dr John Mundy | University of Central Lancashire |
| Dr Graham Murdock | Loughborough University |
| Mr Tim O'Sullivan | De Montfort University |
| Professor Sue Thornham (Chair) | University of Sunderland |
| Professor John Tulloch | Cardiff University |
| Dr Tim Wall | University of Central England, Birmingham |
| Professor Brian Winston | University of Westminster |

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