



# Subject Benchmark Statement

Librarianship, Information,  
Knowledge, Records and Archives  
Management

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## About this Statement

This QAA Subject Benchmark Statement for Librarianship, Information, Knowledge, Records and Archives Management defines what can be expected of a graduate 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. Subject Benchmark Statements also describe the nature and characteristics of awards in a particular discipline 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:
  - equity, diversity, and inclusion
  - accessibility and the needs of disabled students
  - education for sustainable development
  - employability, entrepreneurship and enterprise education
  - generative artificial intelligence
- 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 updating 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. While this Subject Benchmark Statement has been developed to provide guidance for both undergraduate and postgraduate study, courses in the areas of Librarianship, Information, Knowledge, Records and Archive Management are more typically studied at postgraduate level.

They may also be used as a reference point by external examiners when considering whether the design of a course and the threshold standards of achievement are comparable with those of other higher education providers. Furthermore, Statements can support professional, statutory and regulatory bodies (PSRBs) with their definitions and interpretations of academic standards.

You may want to read this document if you are:

- involved in the design, delivery and review of courses in Librarianship, Information, Knowledge, Records and Archives Management
- a prospective student thinking about undertaking a course in Librarianship, Information, Knowledge, Records and Archives Management
- an employer, wanting to find out about the knowledge and skills generally expected of Librarianship, Information, Knowledge, Records and Archives Management 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, Subject Benchmark Statements are part of the current quality arrangements in Scotland, Wales and 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 when designing, delivering and reviewing courses. These may include requirements set out by PSRBs and industry or employer expectations. In 2024 QAA published an update to the [Quality Code](#), which will be helpful when using this Statement.

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 Librarianship, Information, Knowledge, Records and Archives Management degree**

## **Context**

1.1 The Subject Benchmark Statement for Librarianship, Information, Knowledge, Records and Archives Management sets out threshold and typical standards for bachelor's degrees with honours, postgraduate certificates, postgraduate diplomas and master's degrees. The Statement represents general expectations about academic standards within the subject. The choice of areas to cover in combined and joint courses varies from provider to provider, depending on factors such as the subject area with which the main subject is combined, the concerns of relevant employers, and the research profile and specialist interests of teaching staff. It is recognised that all degree programmes within the remit of the Subject Benchmark Statement are foundations of learning and skills development, outlining the broad range of skills and knowledge required by those working in information professions, and for future professional accreditations.

## **Purposes of a Librarianship, Information, Knowledge, Records and Archives Management degree**

1.2 Degree courses in Librarianship, Information, Knowledge, Records and Archives Management aim to equip students with a range of knowledge, understanding and skills at a level that prepares them for professional career opportunities in jobs broadly concerned with how society uses information. Students acquire an understanding of the theoretical principles of the subject area that guides their career development in whichever area or areas of librarianship, information, knowledge, records and archives management they choose for their career.

1.3 Students of Librarianship, Information, Knowledge, Records and Archives Management develop a critical understanding of and are equipped to critically engage with and contribute to the ethical, equitable and sustainable use and management of information and knowledge within society. As a result, degrees in Librarianship, Information, Knowledge, Records and Archives Management are likely to address the following areas:

### **Safeguarding knowledge and records**

- Developing comprehensive preservation plans addressing both physical and digital assets, ensuring long-term accessibility and addressing format migration needs.
- Understanding and applying appropriate archival principles (for example, provenance, original order) when organising and describing materials.
- Implementing disaster preparedness measures, risk assessment, backup strategies and recovery plans, including in response to environmental impacts.
- Adhering to industry standards for the storage of fragile or sensitive materials, ensuring proper environmental controls and security measures.

### **Navigating the digital landscape**

- Mastering metadata creation and application, using controlled vocabularies and standards to enhance discoverability.
- Designing and managing content management systems, digital repositories, and web platforms adhering to accessibility best practices.

- Implementing user-centred design principles and accessibility guidelines to create intuitive and inclusive interfaces for online resources and services.
- Critically evaluating and applying emerging technologies for information management tasks, considering ethical implications.

### **Promoting literacies (including data, digital, information, media)**

- Collaborating with educators and community partners to develop comprehensive information literacy and reader development programmes that address a range of skill levels and needs.
- Designing instruction and outreach activities that foster critical thinking, media literacy, and safe and responsible digital participation.
- Adapting critical information literacy instruction to diverse audiences, including children, adults and lifelong learners, whether in the community or workplace.
- Developing the ability to use appropriate tools for organising, describing, retrieving, providing access to and exploiting information resources, for example use of thesauri, taxonomies, metadata, databases, data mining, data analytics and bibliometrics.

### **Championing information equity**

- Actively pursuing strategies that mitigate biases in information collections, systems, and services, ensuring fair representation and dismantling barriers to access.
- Designing and implementing culturally responsive outreach, programming and services tailored to meet the needs of diverse communities.
- Creating inclusive physical and digital library spaces and collections that cater to individuals with varying abilities and needs.
- Partnering with community organisations and educators to promote a range of literacies, including academic, data, digital, media and information for all, and ensuring the inclusion of previously marginalised groups.
- Engaging in critical discussions about biased information practices, and fostering a more liberated approach, confronting structural inequalities within traditional knowledge systems that may discriminate on the basis of race, gender, disability or other characteristics.

### **Driving innovation**

- Collecting and analysing user data, service metrics and industry trends to inform evidence-based decision-making and continuous improvement.
- Fostering a culture of experimentation, exploring how new technologies and approaches can enhance information services.
- Proactively identifying opportunities for entrepreneurship, developing new information-based products, services or enterprises.
- Experimenting with, and applying artificial intelligence (AI) tools for automated tasks, including metadata generation and recommender systems, ensuring ethical oversight.

### **Advocating for information rights**

- Championing intellectual freedom, data privacy and open access to information and data.

- Participating in the development of organisational policies that address ethical information practices, responsible data governance and user rights.
- Engaging in local and national advocacy efforts to support legislation that promotes equitable access to information and safeguards user privacy.

### **Thinking strategically**

- Employing strategic analysis and leadership to implement, monitor and evaluate the success of initiatives, and understand the impact on communities or users involved.
- Using outcomes to inform the development of future services and outreach.

## **Characteristics of a Librarianship, Information, Knowledge, Records and Archives Management degree**

1.4 All contemporary Librarianship, Information, Knowledge, Records and Archives Management degrees prioritise design principles which ensure information systems and services are usable by individuals with diverse abilities and needs. In addition, degrees in this discipline typically include some or all of the following characteristics.

- An interdisciplinary focus ensuring content from fields such as data science, public policy, digital humanities or pedagogical design and theory and, where appropriate, featuring collaborative projects with students from other disciplines.
- A focus on the legal and ethical responsibilities of information professionals and organisations, the importance of supporting human rights and equalities legislation and their place in the information landscape, especially around concepts such as user privacy, intellectual freedom, intellectual property and freedom of access to information.
- A focus on data ethics and the development and understanding of responsible data practices.
- Theoretical and practical balance, incorporating case studies and problem-based learning to connect theories to real-world scenarios, and facilitating, where appropriate, opportunities for work experience, internships or research projects that offer hands-on experience within information organisations.
- Emphasis on user experience (UX) involving user testing and participatory design methods, to create intuitive interfaces and services.
- Attention to social justice, integrating discussions of bias in information systems, and a liberated focus on information equity issues. This involves the consideration of issues such as decolonising information practices, challenging power structures within knowledge systems related to biases, including disability and gender, and designing a sustainable information infrastructure.
- Technological fluency, building in course coverage of data visualisation, programming for information management, and web accessibility.
- Focus on lifelong learning, fostering connections with professional and sector associations to encourage networking and access to continuing education opportunities.

1.5 Within Librarianship, Information, Knowledge, Records and Archive Management courses, teaching and learning takes a variety of forms; courses legitimately combine different approaches. Each course defines its own desired learning outcomes in ways that command credibility and recognises the need to ensure academic and vocational standards

by means of the professional scrutiny provided by internal peer review and external examiners.

1.6 Variety in assessment is of value in this subject. All departments or subject groups develop clear assessment policies which are consistent with the learning outcomes of their degree schemes. Policy documentation specifies clearly what students are expected to learn, how their work will be assessed, and the relationship between the two. At the same time, departments and subject groups consider and explain the relationship between formative and summative assessment; that is, between assessment designed as feedback on progress, and assessment that is primarily for credit accumulation, progression and degree classification purposes.

## Equality, diversity and inclusion

1.7 Librarianship, Information, Knowledge, Records and Archives Management are closely related disciplines which together encompass the principles and practices of knowledge representation, knowledge organisation and communication. In a digitally enabled society, professionals in this subject work to ensure that all people, regardless of their background or identity, can equitably find, use, evaluate and communicate information needed for work, study or everyday life. This requires understanding of how such information objects are created and may be represented, how knowledge is generated, how people disseminate and share information, and why information objects need to be carefully managed for possible retrieval now and in the future.

1.8 By their very nature, information services provide settings and systems to empower diverse groups and individuals to use information effectively, with individual information needs appropriately met. The setting may be public or private (including organisational or educational), at home or on the move, local, national or international, physical or virtual. Effective information provision requires the identification of the information needs and behaviours of the target audiences, and an understanding of the wider cultural, historical, educational and organisational context of the information. This involves principles and practices that reflect and contribute to information literacy. Examples include information retrieval, data mining and analytics, and the use of websites, apps and social media, design and maintenance. Information architecture provides the framework and standards, within which information products, services and systems are created, analysed, evaluated, moderated and manipulated to meet the requirements of user, customer and client communities. In order to provide such services, information professionals require strong interpersonal skills and an understanding of the wider cultural, societal and policy context in which they operate.

1.9 Librarianship, Information, Knowledge, Records and Archive Management practitioners are culturally competent and sensitive to the needs of diverse users; they are able to recognise and manage appropriately the wider ethical and cultural considerations and contexts concerning historic information artefacts and objects in their care (and the original selection and curation thereof). Examples include colonial era practices and the presence of outdated or biased ways of presenting information, especially related to groups within society who may have been previously marginalised.

1.10 Graduates from these disciplines are therefore equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge to make a positive contribution to the information sectors and societies in which they work; the principles of fair and unbiased access to information for everyone lie at the heart of the ethical framework within which they operate. Professionals in these fields therefore recognise and espouse the principles of diversity and inclusion recommended by the relevant professional bodies such as the [Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals](#) (CILIP) and the [Archives and Records Association](#) (ARA).



## Accessibility and the needs of disabled students

1.11 Librarianship, Information, Knowledge, Records and Archives Management courses are designed to be highly accessible; they use a wide and inclusive range of teaching, learning and assessment methods to support the needs of students from as wide a range of backgrounds and marginalised or underrepresented groups as possible. Subject teams keep up to date with legislation and best practice in this area, and engage with their students to ensure that accessible arrangements are in place. Courses take advantage of the flexibility afforded by digital learning and resources to make teaching and learning accessible in a range of formats to meet student needs and learning styles. Courses pay particular attention to practical challenges, such as those faced by disabled students, neurodivergent students, those with mental and physical health conditions, students with caring responsibilities, commuter students, those from underprivileged socioeconomic backgrounds and students who keep religious observance. This consideration covers classroom experience, online and hybrid forms of learning, flexible learning resources and work on virtual or in-person placements and visits. [QAA guidance](#) on the creation of inclusive subject learning communities, including curriculum design, course content, learning and teaching, and assessment and feedback practices can be referenced in the development of programmes.

## Education for sustainable development

1.12 The study of Librarianship, Information, Knowledge, Records and Archives Management addresses social, cultural, environmental and economic concerns by identifying, creating, acquiring, organising, retrieving, preserving and curating information, and disseminating it to individuals and communities across the globe. The discipline contributes directly towards achievement of the [UN Sustainable Development Goals](#) in a range of areas, including, but not limited to, poverty (SDG1), quality education (SDG4), gender equality (SDG5), reducing inequalities (SDG10), sustainable cities and communities (SDG11), and responsible consumption and production (SDG12).

1.13 Courses in this subject area also contribute to sustainability through their disciplinary focus on the vital societal value of recorded knowledge, as well as work with cultural heritage institutions, including with respect to conservation, preservation and the constant refreshing of an understanding of the past.

1.14 More broadly, Librarianship, Information, Knowledge, Records and Archives Management prepares students to meet sustainability needs and challenges through its inherent attention to issues of the ethical and sustainable use of information objects within society, a key professional concern evidenced in the [CILIP Green Libraries Manifesto](#), the [ARA Environmental Sustainability Group](#), and the aims of the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions' (IFLA's) [Environment, Sustainability and Libraries Section \(ENSULIB\)](#). As the key discipline focuses on preservation and access to knowledge, Librarianship, Information, Knowledge, Records and Archives Management promotes best practices in the sustainable management of information. This includes both the technical aspects of preservation and the societal implications of how information is organised, interpreted and critically evaluated through effective knowledge organisation systems and information literacy practices.

## Employability, enterprise and entrepreneurship education

1.15 Employability, enterprise and entrepreneurship education supports behaviours, attributes and competencies that are likely to have a significant impact on the individual student in terms of their choice of employment destination and future career success. It prepares students for changing environments and provides enhanced impact through

placements and activities that build links between academic institutions and external organisations.

1.16 Beyond employment, entrepreneurship education provides competencies to help students lead a rewarding, self-determined professional life, well placed to add social, cultural and economic value to society through their careers.

1.17 Because they are practice-based, degree courses in Librarianship, Information, Knowledge, Records and Archives Management aim to provide an excellent foundation for careers within the field. Through a curriculum that addresses up-to-date and relevant topics within the field, students develop skills which can be applied to the workplace. Assessment is focused on authentic learning tasks such as researching and writing reports and policy, critically analysing operational requirements, developing specialist knowledge and techniques, practical, applied projects, and reflective professional practice. Skills such as collaborative group-working and presentation are embedded within assessment methods. Critical and evidence-based reflection are also important elements of effective professional practice.

1.18 Key skillsets around enterprise, employability and entrepreneurship are at the forefront of the disciplinary perspective on essential skills for the profession. For example, the [Professional Knowledge and Skills Base](#) that is at the heart of CILIP accreditation of Librarianship, Information, Knowledge, Records and Archives Management degrees identifies generic skills related to (1) leadership, advocacy, influencing and personal effectiveness, (2) technology and communication, (3) strategy, planning and management, and (4) customer focus, service design and marketing. These skills underpin the distinctive features of a Librarianship, Information, Knowledge, Records and Archives Management degree as discussed in section 2.

1.19 Enterprise is at the core of this subject area in the development of the skills of creativity, originality, initiative, idea generation, service design, adaptability, problem identification, problem solving, innovation, expression, communication and practical action. Graduates are reflective, proactive and positive, and capable of leading the sector forward.

## **Generative artificial intelligence**

1.20 Generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) raises ethical questions and concerns for human rights, legal and regulatory frameworks, sustainable use and digital divides, academic integrity, and the perpetuation of societal structural biases and knowledge structures. Within this evolving information landscape, courses in Librarianship, Information, Knowledge, Records and Archives Management can develop knowledge and understanding of the impact of AI technologies on libraries in different sectors. They can also promote critical discussion on how libraries can adapt to changing knowledge, education, technological and labour market changes that AI might bring. Students develop digital skills and competencies relevant to the use of GenAI, such as information literacy, digital literacy and algorithmic literacy, and are equipped with knowledge and skills for educating others about the positive application and the social implications of using AI tools and technologies. Educators and courses promote the concepts of ethical AI systems and technologies and AI 'for good', developing understanding of how people and communities access, collect and receive information; they explore ethics and principles such as trust, bias, equity, transparency, inclusivity, privacy, intellectual property, credibility and misinformation, and the need for a liberation of information practices.

1.21 Courses in Librarianship, Information, Knowledge, Records and Archives Management prepare students to develop knowledge and skills for using GenAI and machine learning technologies. This achieves the purposes of delivering innovation and creating new

dimensions to service provision by, for example, using AI-enabled tools for search and discovery, engaging with AI specialists to create applications for library use, and developing processes, operations and automated library services in a way that meets ethical, privacy and legal standards. Courses in Librarianship, Information, Knowledge, Records and Archives Management are guided by clear ethical principles, standards and frameworks (such as the [CILIP Ethical Framework](#)) which help to ensure equity, impartiality and avoidance of bias, as well as the confidentiality of information and the rights of users to privacy. Professional bodies in the Librarianship, Information, Knowledge, Records and Archives Management space regularly update guidance on use of AI tools, such as the [CILIP AI Hub](#).

## 2 Distinctive features of Librarianship, Information, Knowledge, Records and Archive Management

### Design

2.1 As a subject area, Librarianship, Information, Knowledge, Records and Archive Management has some distinctive ethical and theoretical foundations. These are embodied in professional body standards, such as the [CILIP Ethical Framework](#) and [ARA Code of Ethics](#), providing students with the opportunity to develop practical, applicable skills that will be key to their future careers. It is also grounded in long-established legal frameworks, familiarity with which will inform many aspects of future careers. These include statutory protection for public library facilities, equalities law, copyright protections and legislation such as Data Protection and Freedom of Information which enshrines citizen access to materials. Graduates of Librarianship, Information, Knowledge, Records and Archive Management degrees have a wide range of potential employment opportunities in the public, private and third sectors, including librarianship in education, commercial, legal and health sectors, archival and records management work, digital and physical curation, information governance, and corporate information and knowledge management.

2.2 Librarianship, Information, Knowledge, Records and Archive Management is both vocationally and academically grounded and, as such, there are multiple and diverse routes into the profession, with many students first encountering it vocationally through postgraduate study. The subject area seeks to embrace the diverse educational, personal and professional backgrounds that exist across student communities, highlighting how a plurality of perspectives is essential to the meaningful use and understanding of information.

2.3 While all students in any discipline need to utilise a range of information formats in their studies, those in Librarianship, Information, Knowledge, Records and Archive Management are also learning how to use such resources to instruct future clients and information professionals in their use. Thus, the development of a critical understanding of the growing range of information formats and sources is central to the subject area of Librarianship, Information, Knowledge, Records and Archive Management. As such, students are required to reflect on their own experiences and ethical priorities as information users, when information is itself the subject of study. Students should be able to develop and demonstrate an understanding of the fluidity of information, impact of use and need for appraisal amid societal and technological evolution.

### Progression

2.4 Over the course of a standard undergraduate degree with honours (FHEQ Level 6; FQHEIS Level 10) or, if available, an integrated master's degrees (FHEQ Level 7; FQHEIS Level 11) a Librarianship, Information, Knowledge, Records and Archives Management student 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 (and, if specified, higher-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.

2.5 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 Librarianship, Information, Knowledge, Records and Archives Management 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.

2.6 Undergraduates studying Librarianship, Information, Knowledge, Records and Archives Management courses as part of a combined or joint degree with other subjects (including courses that specify major and minor options) will achieve core elements of the specific and generic skills outlined in this Statement, and will add others according to the areas covered in the other subject(s) of their degree. Additionally, students may explore the overlap between different disciplines, creating further opportunities for interdisciplinary study.

2.7 Any student enrolled on a standard undergraduate honours degree course in Librarianship, Information, Knowledge, Records and Archives Management may exit earlier and be eligible for a Certificate of Higher Education (FHEQ Level 4; FQHEIS Level 8), a Diploma of Higher Education (FHEQ Level 5; FQHEIS Level 9), or other awards depending upon the levels of study completed to a satisfactory standard.

2.8 Students are encouraged to conceive of and plan for ongoing progression within the context of continuing professional development, preparing to regularly refresh and strengthen skills as reflective practitioners. This includes undertaking vocational recognition through relevant professional bodies, such as CILIP Professional Registration, ARA's Professional Development Programme, and The Information & Records Management Society's (IRMS's) Accreditation programme, as a complement to or progression from core studies.

## Flexibility

2.9 Much of what has been said under Accessibility in paragraph 1.11 can apply here too. Librarianship, Information, Knowledge, Records and Archive Management can be taught and assessed in an increasingly flexible way that works with the strengths and needs of the individual student. The non-linear nature of the discipline affords significant potential for flexible delivery of content. The discipline has long attracted part-time students, and especially mature students returning to study after many years in the workplace, or wishing to remain in the workplace during study. Therefore, flexible approaches to learning may be of particular value.

2.10 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 campus, by distance learning, online, and/or through hybrid learning, 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 (for example, as part of the [Lifelong Learning Entitlement](#)), short-accredited learning, recognition of prior learning or accreditation of prior experiential learning.

2.11 At providers in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, the duration of a full-time course leading to a standard undergraduate degree is three years, or four years for an integrated master's degree. Scottish bachelor's degrees with honours are typically designed to include four years of study and integrated master's five, which relates to the structure of Scottish primary and secondary education. A full-time master's degree is typically one year in length.

2.12 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 those achieved on full-time routes.

## Partnership

2.13 Library, Information, Knowledge, Records and Archive Management graduates may enter a great variety of roles across a range of diverse and rapidly evolving sectors, including public services, education, health and well-being, enterprise and technological innovation. It is therefore appropriate that learning is grounded, wherever possible, in its relevance to wider society, and the consequences of the use and misuse of information, as well as disinformation, are made clear. This can be achieved through upholding the ethical standards at the core of the professions and through embedding partnerships within course content.

2.14 Courses are encouraged to make use of placements and/or workplace-related projects, whether online, hybrid or in person, that will enable students to witness the potential impact of the skills in development when applied in a real-world context. Such placements and projects further help to illuminate the diversity of career paths available upon graduation, and to expand students' professional networks in ways that embody the value of knowledge sharing and collaboration as a grounding principle of professional practice.

2.15 Many courses of study will be accredited by sector bodies such as CILIP and ARA, recognising the courses' ability to equip students with the core knowledge and skills expected of new professionals. Accordingly, students are encouraged to engage with relevant professional bodies as a complement to core studies; this may involve attending webinars, workshops and conferences, as well as considering volunteer membership of local and/or sector-specific committees, such as the CILIP Students & New Professionals Community. Working in partnership with fellow professionals as an early career professional will increase student familiarity with the sector body standards that will shape continuing professional development. These include the CILIP [Professional Knowledge and Skills Base](#) and the ARA [Competency Framework](#), as well as options for later vocational recognition, such as [CILIP Chartership](#) and [ARA professional registration](#).

## Monitoring and review

2.16 A major feature of academic quality assurance and enhancement at a higher education institution is having in place monitoring and regular review processes for the courses it delivers. Degree-awarding bodies, and their collaborative partnerships, routinely collect and analyse information and undertake periodic course review according to their own needs. 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 historical monitoring to develop an understanding of student achievement or inform future course planning.

2.17 The student voice is paramount in monitoring and review, and degree-awarding bodies will have in place a system for student input into the monitoring and evaluation process. The regular iteration of this is likely to include an arena for staff and student liaison which enables the regular provision and collection of feedback. Additionally, student involvement in teaching evaluation, and periodic reviews, are a crucial element of good practice.

2.18 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 independent perspective on any proposed changes and ensure threshold standards are achieved and content is appropriate for the subject.

2.19 The external examining 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 for Librarianship, Information, Knowledge, Records and Archives Management, can play an important role in supporting external examiners in advising on whether threshold standards are being met in a specific subject area.

2.20 Librarianship, Information, Knowledge, Records and Archive Management courses with professional and vocational outcomes may also require evaluation and accreditation from professional and regulatory bodies to enable graduates to practice within these professions. These accreditations are usually done through a combination of site visits and desk-based reviews. Accreditation of courses usually takes place at a set point every few years, with accreditation being granted for that period and subject to successful re-application to the professional body. Degree-awarding bodies teaching vocational subjects can also consider forming external advisory bodies made up from members of the professions that can input into curriculum design.



## 3 Content, structure and delivery

### Content

3.1 Librarianship, Information, Knowledge, Records and Archives Management is a broad and interdisciplinary subject of study. The exact breadth and depth of content varies dependent on course of study and department specialism.

3.2 The platform of knowledge, understanding and skills outlined in section 2, and the distinctive features and diversity of specialisms in courses outlined in this section, ensure that the content of Librarianship, Information, Knowledge, Records and Archives Management courses provides all graduates with a broad and relevant range of knowledge and skills.

### Teaching and learning

3.3 Teaching and learning across the discipline is undertaken in a variety of modes, including face-to-face, distance, hybrid and blended styles. A high degree of emphasis is placed on the acquisition and development of both theoretical and practical skills to develop flexible, reflexive and skilled professionals.

3.4 Teaching may take a range of forms to enable students to learn in ways that suit their individual learning styles wherever possible. To this end, teaching may include traditional lectures and seminars; case study and problem-based learning; practical projects in the classroom, lab, or with professional partners; and learning in the workplace.

3.5 Courses equip students with the knowledge and skills to work within the information professions. They foster close working partnerships with professional practice to enable students to situate and apply their learning within the professional domain. Engagement with the profession may take many forms, including visits, guest lectures, practical work experience and supervised practical projects, reflecting the wider sector landscape.

3.6 Students are supported to become independent learners so that they have the skills and knowledge for self-development on graduation. Independent learning may take many forms but can include guided reading outside of the classroom, seminar preparation, leading sessions and workshops, and independent research projects.

3.7 Evidence-based practice is central to the profession, and research training remains an important component of programmes. Students are provided with the necessary training and guidance to enable them to design, conduct and reflect on a research project.

3.8 Courses foster an appreciation of the value of continuing professional development among graduates, which can include introducing students to the work of and professional development activities provided by relevant professional bodies and learned societies. Students are encouraged to develop a positive and reflective attitude to lifelong learning and develop their capacity to plan for their future educational and career development.

### Assessment

3.9 Diversity in assessment is critical for several reasons. Firstly, a variety of assessment methods enables students to demonstrate the wide mix of competencies developed over a programme of study. Secondly, varying the format of assessment across a programme of study acknowledges the diverse educational background and qualifications of students in this discipline, resulting in inclusive and accessible assessment methods through which



students can be rewarded for their strengths and encouraged to develop new skills in areas they find more challenging.

3.10 Students undertake a range of authentic assignments which are grounded in relevant workplace and sector contexts, and enable them to demonstrate the wide variety of professional competencies and soft skills required in the information sector, specifically, and in relation to employability more broadly. These will include assessments which:

- allow a student to develop and demonstrate professional competencies, for example through portfolios, synoptic assessment and self-reflection
- provide the opportunity for reflexive and critical evaluation of professional and sector identity, professional development and a student's learning journey, for example through critical reflections, presentations or case studies
- enable students to engage in authentic assessment and apply learning which makes a meaningful contribution within sector or workplace settings, or in social environments and contexts, by engaging in practical projects, placements or producing project-related documentation
- demonstrate an ability to work collaboratively and effectively as part of a group through, for example, group projects, presentations or portfolios
- demonstrate the ability to use digital technologies, including use of generative AI, for the creation of websites, databases, online catalogues, presentations, posters, social media outputs and/or other digital content
- enable students to conduct research, involving primary data collection or extensive interrogation and synthesis of secondary data, data analysis and presentation of findings.

3.11 Through assessment processes, students engage with formative and summative feedback opportunities, including tutor and peer feedback. Students are encouraged to develop the ability to give and receive constructive feedback, a skill which is essential in workplace settings. Finally, reflecting on and evaluating their own learning support students to become independent, confident, self-directed and active learners.

## 4 Benchmark standards

### Introduction

4.1 This Subject Benchmark Statement sets out the threshold standards that a student will have demonstrated when they are awarded an honours degree in Librarianship, Information, Knowledge, Records and Archive Management. Demonstrating these standards over time will show that a student has typically achieved the range of knowledge, understanding and skills expected of graduates in Librarianship, Information, Knowledge, Records and Archive Management.

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 of 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.

4.3 Published criteria and grade descriptors are available for all forms of assessment. Criteria at all levels of classification give predominance to positive achievement, making use of the full range of marks set out in marking schemes. Feedback to students on performance indicates the kinds of improvements that would be necessary to achieve a higher mark.

4.4 Please note that the minimum threshold standards for undergraduate and master's levels are not intended to specify universal competence standards for a discipline. If a provider chooses to develop competence standards (as defined by the Equality Act 2010) as part of a programme specification, these can be informed by the relevant Subject Benchmark Statement along with any PSRB requirements. In these circumstances, providers should follow the most recent guidance from the [Equality and Human Rights Commission](#).

### Threshold level

4.5 On graduating with an honours degree in Librarianship, Information, Knowledge, Records and Archive Management, students should be able to demonstrate a systematic understanding of the main body of knowledge for their course of study. They should be able to understand and apply essential concepts, principles and practices of the subject in the context of well-defined scenarios, showing judgement in the selection and application of processes, materials and techniques. These concepts, principles and practices include the ability to:

- apply knowledge in structured and guided contexts
- analyse and evaluate information within established frameworks
- use tools, technologies and methodologies in practical settings.

4.6 In this context, honours graduates at a threshold level of attainment (third class) will have demonstrated some degree of proficiency in the majority of the attributes listed in this Statement.

## Subject knowledge, understanding and skills

4.7 On graduating with an honours degree in Librarianship, Information, Knowledge, Records and Archive Management, students should be able to:

- develop and implement strategies that identify and address biases in information collections, systems and services, ensuring fair representation and dismantling barriers to access
- demonstrate a commitment to accessibility and equity in all aspects of their work, including research, communication and collaboration with others, and actively seek to remove barriers to information access and participation
- create inclusive physical and digital library spaces and collections that cater to individuals with varying abilities and needs
- partner with community organisations and educators to promote a range of literacies, including academic, data, digital, media and information, in supporting scholarship and lifelong learning within society
- engage in critical discussions about human rights and equalities in information provision, including confronting structural inequalities within knowledge systems, such as biases based on race, gender or disability, and championing the importance of information equity for groups who have been previously marginalised
- advocate for the importance of freedom of access to information as a fundamental human right, and the associated importance of open access to knowledge resources, and the skills and systems necessary for facilitating such access
- develop retention schedules and comprehensive preservation plans addressing both physical and digital assets, ensuring long-term accessibility, and addressing format migration needs
- understand and apply appropriate archival principles, such as provenance and original order, when organising and describing materials
- adhere to industry standards for the storage of fragile or sensitive materials, ensuring proper environmental controls and security measures
- master cataloguing and classification, description, and metadata creation and application using controlled vocabularies and standards to enhance discoverability
- design and manage content management systems, digital repositories and web platforms adhering to accessibility best practices
- implement user-centred design principles and accessibility guidelines to create intuitive and inclusive interfaces for online resources and services
- critically evaluate and apply emerging technologies for information management tasks, considering ethical implications
- collaborate with educators and community partners to develop comprehensive information literacy and reader development programmes that address a range of skill levels and needs
- design instruction and outreach activities that foster critical thinking, media literacy, and safe and responsible digital participation
- adapt critical information literacy instruction to diverse audiences, including children, adults and lifelong learners

- collect and analyse user data, service metrics and industry trends to inform evidence-based decision-making and continuous improvement
- explore the use of AI tools for automated tasks like metadata generation and recommender systems, ensuring ethical oversight
- champion intellectual freedom, data privacy and open access to information and data
- participate in the development of organisational policies that address ethical information practices, responsible data governance and user rights
- engage in local and national advocacy efforts to support legislation that promotes equitable access to information and safeguards user privacy.

## **Generic skills**

4.8 On graduating with an honours degree in Librarianship, Information, Knowledge, Records and Archive Management, students should be able to:

- identify issues, questions and problems
- demonstrate proficiency in applying a wide range of referencing standards, adhering to their respective details and requirements
- identify gaps in their own knowledge and acquire new knowledge
- understand and analyse knowledge and information
- synthesise the state of knowledge on a particular topic
- apply knowledge and understanding to provide evidenced conclusions
- communicate effectively and appropriately verbally and/or non-verbally
- present knowledge or an argument in a way that is comprehensible to others
- work with a range of data, including qualitative and quantitative empirical data
- critically engage with a range of forms of digital technology to collate, analyse, select and present information
- assert intellectual independence, including undertaking tasks independently (with appropriate guidance and support), conducting self-directed research and demonstrating critical judgement
- work collaboratively, including undertaking work in a group or team and/or participating in discussions
- reflect on their own progress, including personal leadership skills
- identify and examine underlying values and ethics within culture and society and on a personal level
- understand the importance of well-being, mental health and emotions and their relationship with learning
- make appropriate use of feedback provided to further their intellectual development
- appreciate and engage in contemporary debates relating to culture and society, for example around inequality and sustainability.

## **Master's degree in Librarianship, Information, Knowledge, Records and Archive Management**

4.9 This indicates the standard of achievement expected of all students graduating with a postgraduate certificate, postgraduate diploma, or a master's degree in the subject of Librarianship, Information, Knowledge, Records and Archive Management. This includes mastery of advanced concepts and theories which:

- emphasise a deeper understanding of complex issues and the ability to engage with current research and scholarship
- highlight the ability to apply knowledge in real-world scenarios that may be ill-defined or require innovative solutions
- stress the ability to conduct original research, evaluate methodologies, and propose new hypotheses
- focus on the ability to lead and influence change, advocate for ethical practices and develop strategic solutions to complex challenges.

4.10 Given the diverse routes into this profession, including postgraduate qualification of those with undergraduate degrees in different disciplines, students should be expected to demonstrate a systematic and comprehensive understanding of the main body of knowledge for their course of study. They should be able to critically analyse and apply essential concepts, principles and practices of the subject in complex and diverse scenarios, demonstrating sound judgement in the selection and application of processes, materials and techniques. At master's level, students may also be asked to demonstrate skills and understanding in relation to strategic thinking and leadership, as well as the ability to undertake original research to a higher academic standard.

4.11 At master's level, graduates at a threshold level of attainment will have demonstrated some degree of proficiency in the majority of the attributes listed in this Statement. Accordingly, the main body of knowledge for the course of study and essential concepts, principles and practices may be understood as some or all of the ability to:

### **Subject knowledge, understanding and skills**

- demonstrate a nuanced understanding of the specific information needs and resources relevant to diverse disciplines and professional fields, such as science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM), law, business, and the arts and humanities
- design and implement culturally responsive outreach, programming and services tailored to meet the needs of diverse communities
- create inclusive physical and digital library spaces and collections that cater to individuals with varying abilities and needs
- partner with community organisations and educators to promote a range of literacies, including academic, data, digital, media and information, for marginalised groups
- engage in critical discussions about decolonising information practices and confronting structural inequalities within knowledge systems
- develop retention schedules and comprehensive preservation plans addressing both physical and digital assets, ensuring long-term accessibility and addressing format migration needs
- understand and apply appropriate archival principles, such as provenance and original order, when organising and describing materials

- implement disaster preparedness measures, including risk assessments, backup strategies and recovery plans
- adhere to industry standards for the storage of fragile or sensitive materials, ensuring proper environmental controls and security measures
- master cataloguing and classification, description, and metadata creation and application using controlled vocabularies and standards to enhance discoverability
- design and manage content management systems, digital repositories and web platforms adhering to accessibility best practices
- implement user-centred design principles and accessibility guidelines to create intuitive and inclusive interfaces for online resources and services
- critically evaluate and apply emerging technologies for information management tasks, considering ethical implications
- collaborate with educators and community partners to develop comprehensive information literacy and reader development programmes that address a range of skill levels and needs, including those of children, adults and lifelong learners
- adapt critical information literacy instruction to the needs of diverse audiences, including children, adults and lifelong learners
- design instruction and outreach activities that foster critical thinking, media literacy, and safe and responsible digital participation
- collect and analyse user data, service metrics and industry trends to inform evidence-based decision-making and continuous improvement
- foster a culture of experimentation, exploring how new technologies and approaches can enhance information services
- proactively identify opportunities for entrepreneurship, developing new information-based products, services or enterprises
- explore the use of AI tools for automated tasks like metadata generation and recommender systems, ensuring ethical oversight
- champion intellectual freedom, data privacy and open access to information and data
- participate in the development of organisational policies that address ethical information practices, responsible data governance and user rights
- engage in local and national advocacy efforts to support legislation that promotes equitable access to information and safeguards user privacy
- employ strategic analysis and leadership to implement, monitor and evaluate the success of initiatives and understand the impact on communities or users involved
- use outcomes to inform the development of future services and outreach.

## **Generic skills**

4.12 On graduating with a master's degree in Librarianship, Information, Knowledge, Records and Archive Management, students should be able to demonstrate:

- a comprehensive understanding of techniques applicable to their own research or advanced scholarship, together with the ability to demonstrate use of appropriate research philosophies and methodologies
- originality in the application of knowledge

- a practical understanding of how established techniques of research and enquiry are used to create and evaluate evidence for enhanced professional practice
- an ability to complete through independent study a substantial, critical, empirical research or work-based project, significant review or case study that may also contribute to research in the subject or the solution of a work-related problem
- a conceptual understanding that enables them to:
  - critically evaluate current research and advanced scholarship in the subject area
  - evaluate methodologies, develop critiques of them and, where appropriate, propose new hypotheses; this skill may require awareness of methodologies in cognate subjects
- ability to deal with complex issues both systematically and creatively, make sound judgements in the absence of complete data, and communicate their conclusions clearly to specialist and non-specialist audiences
- self-direction, creativity and originality
- skills in leadership and advocacy, with informed awareness of dynamic internal and external factors that may influence these
- an ability to exploit tools and processes for effective global networking
- an ability to challenge existing practice and justify proposed changes.

## 5 List of references and further resources

Archives and Records Association (ARA) *Diversity and Inclusion Allies*:  
[www.archives.org.uk/diversity-inclusion-allies](http://www.archives.org.uk/diversity-inclusion-allies)

Archives and Records Association (ARA) *Environment Sustainability Group*:  
[www.archives.org.uk/news/meet-the-ara-environmental-sustainability-group](http://www.archives.org.uk/news/meet-the-ara-environmental-sustainability-group)

Archives and Records Association (ARA) *Professional Registration Programme: Competency Framework*:  
<https://archivesandrecords.smapply.io/res/p/competencies/>

Archives and Records Association (ARA) *The benefits of Professional registration*:  
[www.archives.org.uk/qualification-levels-benefits](http://www.archives.org.uk/qualification-levels-benefits)

CILIP *AI Hub*:  
[www.cilip.org.uk/page/AI](http://www.cilip.org.uk/page/AI)

CILIP's *Ethical Framework*:  
[www.cilip.org.uk/page/ethics#:~:text=The%20Ethical%20Principles&text=Preservation%20and%20continuity%20of%20access,of%20all%20individuals%20to%20privacy](http://www.cilip.org.uk/page/ethics#:~:text=The%20Ethical%20Principles&text=Preservation%20and%20continuity%20of%20access,of%20all%20individuals%20to%20privacy)

CILIP *Green Libraries Manifesto– working together for people and planet*:  
[www.cilip.org.uk/general/custom.asp?page=GreenLibrariesManifesto](http://www.cilip.org.uk/general/custom.asp?page=GreenLibrariesManifesto)

CILIP *Professional Registration - Chartership*:  
[www.cilip.org.uk/page/ProfessionalRegistrationChartership](http://www.cilip.org.uk/page/ProfessionalRegistrationChartership)

CILIP *The Professional Knowledge and Skills base*:  
[www.cilip.org.uk/page/PKSB](http://www.cilip.org.uk/page/PKSB)

CILIP *Widening Participation*:  
[www.cilip.org.uk/page/StrategicReviewDiversity](http://www.cilip.org.uk/page/StrategicReviewDiversity)

International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) *Environment, Sustainability and Library Section*:  
[www.ifla.org/units/environment-sustainability-and-libraries/](http://www.ifla.org/units/environment-sustainability-and-libraries/)

Office for Students (OfS) *Lifelong learning entitlement*:  
[www.officeforstudents.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/skills-and-employment/lifelong-learning-entitlement/](http://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/skills-and-employment/lifelong-learning-entitlement/)

Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) *Creating Inclusive Subject Communities*:  
[www.qaa.ac.uk/news-events/news/creating-inclusive-subject-communities-new-qaa-advice](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/news-events/news/creating-inclusive-subject-communities-new-qaa-advice)

Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) *Enterprise and Entrepreneurship Education*:  
[www.qaa.ac.uk/the-quality-code/enterprise-and-entrepreneurship-education](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/the-quality-code/enterprise-and-entrepreneurship-education)

United Nations (UN) *Sustainability Goals*:  
<https://sdgs.un.org/goals>



## 6 Membership of the Advisory Group

### Membership of the Advisory Group for the Subject Benchmark Statement for Librarianship, Information, Knowledge, Records and Archive Management 2025

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