

QAA Subject benchmark statements

Subject benchmark statements provide a means for the academic community to describe the nature and characteristics of programmes in a specific subject. They also represent general expectations about the standards for the award of qualifications at a given level and articulate the attributes and capabilities that those possessing such qualifications should be able to demonstrate.

This subject benchmark statement, together with the others published concurrently, refers to the **bachelors degree with honours**.

Subject benchmark statements are used for a variety of purposes. Primarily, they are an important external source of reference for higher education institutions when new programmes are being designed and developed in a subject area. They provide general guidance for articulating the learning outcomes associated with the programme but are not a specification of a detailed curriculum in the subject. Benchmark statements provide for variety and flexibility in the design of programmes and encourage innovation within an agreed overall framework.

Subject benchmark statements also provide support to institutions in pursuit of internal quality assurance. They enable the learning outcomes specified for a particular programme to be reviewed and evaluated against agreed general expectations about standards.

Finally, subject benchmark statements are one of a number of external sources of information that are drawn upon for the purposes of academic review* and for making judgements about threshold standards being met. Reviewers do not use subject benchmark statements as a crude checklist for these purposes however. Rather, they are used in conjunction with the relevant programme specifications, the institution's own internal evaluation documentation, together with primary data in order to enable reviewers to come to a rounded judgement based on a broad range of evidence.

The benchmarking of academic standards for this subject area has been undertaken by a group of subject specialists drawn from and acting on behalf of the subject community. The group's work was facilitated by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education, which publishes and distributes this statement and other benchmarking statements developed by similar subject-specific groups.

The statement represents the first attempt to make explicit the general academic characteristics and standards of an honours degree in this subject area, in the UK.

In due course, but not before July 2003, the statement will be revised to reflect developments in the subject and the experiences of institutions and academic reviewers who are working with it. The Agency will initiate revision and, in collaboration with the subject community, will establish a group to consider and make any necessary modifications to the statement.

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* academic review in this context refers to the Agency's new arrangements for external assurance of quality and standards. Further information regarding these may be found in the *Handbook for Academic Review*, which can be found on the Agency's web site.

Academic standards - Classics and Ancient History (including also Byzantine Studies and Modern Greek)

Foreword

A benchmarking statement for Classics and Ancient History (including Byzantine Studies and Modern Greek) was first produced in response to an invitation from QAA by a committee under the chairmanship of Professor Malcolm Schofield (Cambridge) set up by the Council for University Classical Departments in association with the Society for the Promotion of Byzantine Studies and the Standing Committee on Modern Greek in Universities. In 2005 in response to indications from QAA that it wished statements to be revised CUCD established a small committee to undertake these revisions, in consultation with SPBS and SCOMGIU. The members of this committee were Prof. R. Osborne (Chair, Cambridge), Dr. S. Phillippo (Newcastle), Prof. J. Powell (Royal Holloway) and Prof. C. Smith (St. Andrews).

1. Introduction

1.1 Definition of the subject area

1.1.1 Description in terms of content

The circumstances of the group's constitution (cf. 1.1) and the cumbersome title adopted above - 'Classics and Ancient History (including also Byzantine Studies and Modern Greek)' - indicate that description of the subject area cannot be altogether straightforward. In brief, the subject area embraces at

least two distinct, though by no means unrelated, components, which give it a chronological span of at least four millennia. Although *'Classics and Ancient History'* will often be employed in this document as a shorthand to refer to the subject area as a whole, 'Classics' is properly *a conventional designation for the culture of Greco-Roman antiquity*, particularly as received and understood in the Western European tradition. In this usage 'Classics' expresses the key notion that gives unity to most programmes in the subject area. Chronologically it embraces a period conventionally reckoned as extending from the arrival of Greek-speakers in mainland Greece around the beginning of the second millennium BC to the end of the Western Roman Empire in the fifth century AD, although programmes in the subject area often include material which lies outside these limits, and may deal with cultures other than those of Greece and Rome. *'Byzantine Studies'* is concerned with the *civilization of late antique and mediaeval Byzantium/Constantinople* between its refounding by Constantine in AD 324 and its conquest by the Turks in AD 1453, while 'Modern Greek' designates study of *the Greek-speaking world (including the Greek diaspora) from the late mediaeval period*.

1.1.2 Description in terms of honours programmes

Within the field of Classics as generally understood (1.3.1), the principal *honours degree programmes* available to students are the following:

- *'Classics'* usually designates a programme in which students are required to show proficiency in both the ancient Greek and the Latin languages, and may at least in the first year or two of study make Greek and Latin literature their main but by no means exclusive focus. As such 'Classics' is differentiated from 'Classical Studies'.
- *'Latin'* and *'Greek'* designate programmes of the same general kind as 'Classics', but concentrating on the language, literature and civilisation of ancient Rome and ancient Greece respectively.
- Programmes in *'Classical Studies'* (alternatively: *'Classical Civilization'*) are designed to offer students a broad understanding of the culture of Greco-Roman antiquity as a whole, in all its different aspects and their interrelations. Those entering Classical Studies programmes may have no prior knowledge of ancient Greek or Latin, but are commonly given opportunity to begin learning either or both if they have not already done so. Programmes in Classics and Classical Studies often share common elements.
- Programmes in *'Ancient History'* (sometimes coupled with *Archaeology* or *Classical Archaeology*) are typically concerned with the political, military, economic, social and cultural history of the Greco-Roman world. They characteristically focus on major sub-periods within the classical period as defined in 1.3.1, and on the methodological problems involved in studying a historical culture, with a greater or lesser emphasis on the interpretation of a range of forms of material

evidence. Programmes in Ancient History may, but do not necessarily, involve the study of ancient Greek or Latin.

Programmes in *'Byzantine Studies'* may pay special attention to literature, theology or culture, or to history, archaeology or art history of the Byzantine period, while those in *'Modern Greek'* require proficiency in the modern Greek language, and take as their main concern the language, literature, thought and history of the Greek-speaking world since the later middle ages.

1.4 Scope of the benchmarking statement

1.4.1 Benchmarking information and programme specification

Benchmarking information is regarded by the QAA as one of three main elements in the articulation and assurance of standards in higher education. The other two envisaged are a *qualifications framework* (providing a national reference point for standards of awards at different levels) and *programme specifications* at institutional level. This benchmarking statement makes its main focus the knowledge, abilities and qualities of mind which an honours graduate in the subject area may be expected to exhibit. Comment in the document on principles of programme design is mostly included either as context for the description of graduate attributes or as indicating the ways in which institutions go about ensuring that their graduates acquire those attributes. A general principle relating to programme specification is however enunciated in 1.5; and some further general guidance is provided in 2.2, 2.3, and Section 4 as a whole. Definition of the standards for the award of honours degrees in terms of *programme content* is *a proper matter for autonomous institutions to determine in the light of their own mission statements*.

1.4.2 Beyond the benchmarking statement

By virtue of its limited terms of reference a benchmarking statement is not the place to attempt a comprehensive account of the fundamental aims of honours degree programmes in Classics and Ancient History. A brief indication of the larger picture is nonetheless essential. It is *the basic assumption of a liberal approach to education that language, literature, thought, art and history are worthwhile and compelling subjects of study and understanding in and for themselves*. All honours degree programmes in the arts and humanities will accordingly have as their principal aim the goal of enabling students to attain such understanding, to appreciate the values of its objects, and so to enjoy the life of the mind. For this reason honours degree programmes in these subject areas make a *substantial contribution to the enhancement of the quality of life* of their students, and in so doing fulfil a goal identified in the first sentence of the Dearing Report as the very purpose of education.

1.4.3 Focus of the benchmarking statement

Someone who achieves the understanding, appreciation and enjoyment referred to in 1.4.2 will be likely to have developed a variety of particular personal attributes. To foster such personal development is another major aim of honours degree programmes in arts and humanities, but students who do not develop a love for their subject on its own terms will not readily develop the abilities and qualities of mind which grow through engagement with it. This benchmarking statement offers an analysis of those abilities and qualities of mind associated with the subject area of Classics and Ancient History (including Byzantine Studies and Modern Greek). In doing so the document necessarily disaggregates *a whole which is greater than the sum of its parts*. Where lists are constructed in the sections which follows, these should be read like listings of orchestral players on a concert programme: each item has a value of its own, but its main value resides in its interplay with the other items and its contributions to *a single complex attribute - the mind of the graduate*.

1.5 Governing principles

In specifying benchmarking information for Classics and Ancient History the following principles have been followed:

- benchmarking information is to be expressed at a level of generality applicable to all the programmes - whether for single or joint/combined honours - which fall within the subject area, not separately for specific types of programme
- benchmarking information must be sufficiently flexible to accommodate the need for programmes within the subject area to respond to developments in research and scholarship, student background (including school examination qualifications and the lifelong learning context), student interest and demand, educational method, and technology
- the range, complexity and diversity of the subject area make it appropriate that both within an institution and across different institutions there should be provision of programmes exhibiting a wide range of diversity
- expectations about standards are to be formulated in terms of the personal attributes of honours graduates, not of programme content

The benchmarking information presented in this document is couched mainly in descriptive, not prescriptive, language. It is *conceived as guidance* for the various interested parties mentioned in 1.4.1.

1.6 Organisation of the statement of benchmarking information

1.6.1 Section 2 offers a characterisation of the *subject area* as a field of study. It stresses the *diversity* both of the subjects that fall within the field and of the academic backgrounds and orientations of the students who study them, as well as the *coherence* which single honours degree programmes

should be aiming to achieve, and which should function as a point of reference for classical components in joint or combined honours programmes.

1.6.2 Section 3 describes the personal *attributes* of an honours graduate in the subject area. These attributes divide broadly into

- knowledge and abilities specific to honours graduates in the subject area
- core skills and qualities of mind developed by study in the subject area, but expected of honours graduates in all subject areas: eg intellectual, organisational and interpersonal skills, and skills in communication.

1.6.3 Section 4 discusses briefly first the arrangements for *progression*, then the *study methods* and thirdly the methods of *assessment* characteristic of programmes in the subject area.

1.6.4 Section 5 sets out minimum and typical *standards of attainment* by honours graduates in the subject area. These are expressed in terms of personal attributes.

2. Classics and Ancient History (including Byzantine Studies and Modern Greek)

2.1 A conspectus of the subject area

2.1.1 Historical significance

The classical world did much to shape the growth of early Christianity, the development of Judaism, and the contours of the mediaeval Islamic cultures of the Near East, North Africa and Spain, as also those of Byzantium, Tsarist Russia and the Orthodox world. Its language, literature, history, philosophy, law, science and medicine, art and architecture have been studied continuously in Western Europe, particularly since the Renaissance, and are now the subject of learning, teaching and research at universities throughout the world. It continues to stimulate the imaginations of thinkers and creative artists.

Because of the breadth of its historical significance the subject area has a particularly attractive and important contribution to make in a multicultural society.

2.1.2 Influence on modern education

Engagement with the cultural products of Greco-Roman antiquity has informed a wide range of other arts and humanities subjects and their development. The study of the classics is in itself a subject of study which illuminates understanding of Western and Byzantine civilisation over a long time-span. It has done much *to shape our conceptions of what an educational system should be*; and it constitutes the original paradigm of non-vocational training, to the extent that modern society's expectations of the

general attributes of an honours graduate reflect those long associated with the notion of a classical education.

2.1.3 Subject breadth

The *breadth of the subject area is readily apparent*. At one end, the area of study may extend to Ancient Egypt, the Ancient Near East and the Bronze Age civilisations of Crete and Greece. At the other, Greek and Roman civilisation (whose study potentially encompasses a huge geographical area, from Britain to North Africa and from India to Spain) transmutes into early Christianity and Byzantium, and into the Ottoman and Russian Orthodox and Mediterranean Islamic cultures, the middle ages and Renaissance in Western Europe, and ultimately - and among other shaping influences - the language and culture of Greece and Cyprus today.

2.1.4 Varying pathways

Varying pathways through these worlds result in *the variety of honours degrees* characteristic of the subject area. All involve mastering a number of distinct disciplines. Some are typically more synoptic (Classical Studies/ Civilisation), more linguistic and literary (Classics, Greek, Latin - including Mediaeval and Renaissance Latin - and Modern Greek), or more historical (Ancient History, Ancient and Medieval History, East Mediterranean History, Ancient and Modern History, Classical Archaeology). Honours degree programmes in Byzantine Studies may fall under any of these heads.

2.1.5 Complexity and diversity of the subject area

Students of Classics and Ancient History are therefore confronted with an exceptionally *complex range of disciplines and cultural relationships*. Different programmes of study focus on different combinations within the range. But opportunities are available within the field of Classics (as ordinarily understood) and of Byzantine Studies:

- To develop a command of *two rich and complex ancient languages* (in Byzantine Studies more) which
 - make searching demands of students in their own right, and require of them disciplined intellectual processes
 - are exceptionally well-suited to developing a grasp both of the basic grammatical structure of Indo-European languages and of the nature of the English language in particular, and to fostering skills applicable to other languages and to communication in general
 - despite similarities of origin and structure yield very different expressive resources

- To study in depth an extremely *varied body of literature* that
 - is in continuous dialogue with itself and with which western writing has continued in dialogue ever since
 - offers some of the most influential examples of eg epic, drama and love poetry in world literature, and
 - presents models of rhetorical expression which feed into the acquisition of persuasive written and oral skills, and develop a sense of the uses and especially the manipulation of language
- To come to terms with explorations of *basic philosophical issues* in their pioneering presentation by thinkers with very different cultural and linguistic assumptions from our own, to engage with the arguments and analyses they put forward, and to register the perennial importance for philosophy of their questions, methods and teachings
- To understand the nature of the *societies and political systems* of ancient Greece and Rome and mediaeval Byzantium, how they developed, and the historical reasons for their development and impact on other cultures, and to reckon with the legacy of the classical or Byzantine past in more recent democratic and non-democratic systems
- To *develop observational and interpretative skills with respect to material objects*, to comprehend the *expression of ideas in visual form* and the various artistic and material choices made by Greeks and Romans at different times, and to appreciate their influence on subsequent cultures
- To become familiar with a *range of forms of material evidence* for Greek and Roman civilisation and its ecology, including by engaging in field-work or studying objects in museums, and to achieve an understanding of how they can be exploited in *combination with literary and documentary evidence*, and to become aware of the *contribution new discoveries make to the evolutionary nature of studies* in the subject area

In Modern Greek programmes there is the opportunity:

- To acquire *a fluency written and oral in the language of modern Greek-speaking peoples* and an understanding of their *literature, history and culture*.

2.1.6 Importance of primary materials

Programmes in the subject area all share in one way or another a concern - distinctive among subject areas in the arts and humanities - with study *through primary materials: literary, documentary, archaeological*. There is often a realistic possibility of presenting all the surviving evidence relevant to

a major problem, as is seldom the case for later historical periods. This is an important factor in empowering students of Classics and Ancient History.

2.1.7 Learning and teaching in relation to research

Although a classical canon has been studied over many centuries, new material continues to be discovered and the body of information available for study in all fields within the subject area is continually growing. Previously neglected areas are opened up as researchers put new questions to existing materials. *Programmes of study within the subject area are quick to respond to these developments in research*, not least because at present all departments offering honours degree programmes in Classics and Ancient History are also research-active.

2.1.8 Openness

It is a strength of the subject area that its boundaries are permeable. There is creative interaction with *other disciplines and fields*, including for example anthropology, archaeology, art history, drama, Egyptology, English, history, history of science, Jewish and Near Eastern studies, linguistics, modern languages besides Modern Greek, philosophy and religious studies. Openness to the insights and methodologies of these and other disciplines and fields, and responsiveness to changing approaches within them, help to make Classics and Ancient History a dynamic field of study.

2.1.9 Evolution within the subject area

In a developing, responsive and highly research-active family of disciplines, cross-fertilisation flourishes, enriching the pool of skills and experience on which students may draw. *The subject is evolving and will continue to evolve*. The formulations articulated in this document are accordingly designed to leave *proper scope for institutions to maintain appropriate diversity of provision within it, in response to changing ideas and approaches*, and in the light of the aims and objectives of their own mission statements.

2.2 Programmes of study: diversity and coherence

2.2.1 Diversity

As the diversity of the subject area (2.1.5) will already have suggested, sources of *diversity* in programmes are various and complex. Major factors are the following:

- a focus on *different eras* within a substantial time-frame stretching from the second millennium BC to the present
- the *varying geographical settings* with which students of the subject area may be confronted

- an emphasis on *different aspects of the civilisations and cultures* studied within the subject area, and employment of *different discrete disciplines* as appropriate to them
- the availability of a *wide range* of literary, linguistic, philosophical, historical, archaeological and art historical *methodologies*
- *different theoretical positions* on what it is to understand a civilisation and its cultural products
- the need to offer *multiple levels in language courses*, required to match different degrees of prior experience and different rates of progress
- particularly in Ancient History, Byzantine Studies and Modern Greek, the *different disciplines with which the subject is associated* in different institutions: the majority of students exposed to Byzantine Studies are found not in departments of Classics and Ancient History but in history, theology, art history or archaeology departments, while students of Modern Greek are often located in modern language departments and those studying Ancient History in history departments.

2.2.2 Coherence

Given the situation described in 2.2.1, it is apparent that this benchmarking statement cannot give specific guidance on how coherence should be built into the construction of programmes within the subject area. But it is essential that if students are to gain a proper appreciation of the classical or Byzantine world or of the modern Greek-speaking world, programmes should be coherent. It is for institutions to ensure balance and complementarity in their programme design, with regard both to the options available to students and to permissible combinations of options. Where this is achieved, honours graduates in Classics and Ancient History characteristically develop *a broad and complementary range of knowledge and of intellectual abilities*.

For Classics and Ancient History as ordinarily defined, the potential for such coherence is provided

- by the close interrelationship of the worlds of Greece and Rome despite the language difference between them
- by the classical canon of authors, art objects and historical periods developed in the Byzantine and western European reception of Greco-Roman culture
- by the interdisciplinary character of the subject area: the same evidence is approached from varying perspectives (eg historical, literary and philosophical), and different methodologies (eg historical, archaeological and art historical) are employed within the same general area

In Byzantine Studies a consensus has developed over time on the scope appropriate for undergraduate study in a field of huge linguistic and geographical diversity spanning a millennium. Coherence in programmes is fostered by the close collaboration between colleagues from different institutions and different broader subject groupings that is often characteristic of minority subjects. In Modern Greek programmes the potential for coherence derives principally from their focus on Greece and Greek-speaking areas of the world.

2.3 Student backgrounds and orientations

2.3.1 Educational backgrounds

The *educational backgrounds* of students working for qualifications in the subject area are *extremely varied*. The majority are still *recent school leavers*. Courses in Classical Studies, Ancient History, Byzantine Studies and Modern Greek are open to able students whatever subjects they have studied at school. They may typically include English, History (Ancient, Mediaeval or Modern), one or more modern languages, Classical Civilisation, Art History, Religious Studies, a science, Mathematics. Programmes in Ancient History or Classical Studies or Byzantine Studies or Modern Greek do not make knowledge of Greek or Latin – or indeed any prior acquaintance with the subject area – an entry requirement. Students who enter Classics programmes most frequently have some prior acquaintance with Latin or Greek or both, but they may have no formal qualification in either language. Alongside recent school leavers are rising numbers of *mature students*. In some institutions mature students may form an important constituency among those taking programmes in the subject area, and at the Open University they make up the entire student body. There is huge diversity in the educational backgrounds of students in this category.

2.3.2 Programmes of study: responsiveness and accessibility

The situation described in 2.3.1 has two immediate consequences. The first relates to the nature of honours programmes in the subject area. As at present, these must continue to be *responsive to school examination syllabuses and to changes of many kinds within school education*, and they must be suitable for those whose most recent experience of organised study may be a *university access course or participation in a continuing education programme*. Where institutional structures permit, it is desirable that programmes of study in the subject area be available to part-time honours students.

2.3.3 Student aspirations: discovering new talents

The second consequence relates to students' own aspirations. Students enter programmes in Classics and Ancient History with *widely varying experiences* - indeed sometimes narrow or non-existent - of the fields of study which are embraced by the subject area as a whole. They are accordingly more likely than many others in the area of the humanities or elsewhere to discover that

their *interests change and extend in scope* after they have embarked upon their chosen programme. In the course of their studies many will *discover new talents* and will wish to acquire the disciplines appropriate for development of them: eg an ability in Latin they did not expect, or an enthusiasm and aptitude for subjects such as archaeology, Greek philosophy or Byzantine art for which their school background gave them little specific preparation.

2.3.4 Consequences for programme design: flexibility, balance, further study

Programmes need to *allow for student choice* both at entry point and subsequently, and to make provision for students to *follow individual pathways of learning*, so far as resources permit. Again, students need the *discipline of a curriculum* if they are to make sense of the relationship between different elements available for study within programmes (2.2.2), and an *appropriate framework* within which to make considered and responsible choices. Institutions should therefore put structures in place to ensure that within the full timespan of a given programme every student follows a *balanced and complementary range of courses*. Finally, the structure and content of an honours degree programme must be such that it provides students with the possibility of a *basis for continuing with postgraduate study* in the subject area, and supplies graduate schools with the kind of evidence needed for judging the fitness of individual applicants.

2.3.5 No single model for a Classics and Ancient History graduate

A more general conclusion from the considerations presented in this subsection is that there can be *no single model* of what an honours graduate in Classics and Ancient History is or should be. But given the account of the subject area offered in 2.1 and 2.2, it is to be expected that his or her experience of learning will foster the *academic rigour, mental agility, openness to change and adaptability* suggested by the analysis of graduate attributes in 3.3 - 3.5 below.

3. Attributes of an honours graduate in Classics and Ancient History (including Byzantine Studies and Modern Greek)

3.1 Attributes of honours graduates in Classics and Ancient History

The QAA has encouraged benchmarking groups to focus on the attributes of an honours graduate in formulating benchmarking statements. Given that there can be no one pattern to which an honours graduate in the subject area could be expected to conform, this section describes a cluster of abilities and forms of knowledge. Every honours graduate in the subject area will have acquired most or a majority of these, but in different degrees and from different vantage points depending on differences in programmes of study and in individual pathways through them as well as on personal circumstances and capacities. Accordingly numerous 'models' of the honours graduate in Classics and Ancient History are conceivable (cf. 2.3.5).

3.2 Subject-specific abilities and forms of knowledge

The following *subject-specific* abilities and forms of knowledge are characteristic of an honours graduate in the subject area of Classics, Ancient History, Byzantine Studies and Modern Greek. In different fields within the subject area there will be *variations in the degree of importance* to be attached to each of them and in the modes by which they are fostered. Moreover opportunities and encouragement will be provided within specific programmes for individuals to *follow their own pathways* and develop their own distinctive strengths. But honours graduates in the subject area will typically:

A1 have acquired an understanding of *another culture*, whether focused on its literature, thought, art and religion, or its history and political and social organisation, or its material culture; demonstrated a critical engagement with it; and developed an informed sense of the similarities and differences between it and our own culture

A2 have a broad knowledge, developed within a coherent framework, of *complementary subjects* - drawn from such fields as language, literature, linguistics, philosophy, history, art and archaeology, or theme-based topics which cross the boundaries between them (eg religion, gender studies) - and periods

A3 be familiar with an appropriate and diverse range of *primary materials*, eg literary, philosophical and historical texts, art objects, archaeological evidence, inscriptions, newspapers, sound recordings

A4 command a range of *techniques and methodologies*, such as bibliographical and library research skills, a range of skills in reading and textual analysis, the varieties of historical method, the visual skills characteristic of art criticism, use of statistics (eg in archaeology), philosophical argument and analysis, analytical grasp of language, skills in translation from and/or into Greek (ancient, mediaeval or modern) and/or Latin

A5 understand a range of *viewpoints* on problems of interpretation and evaluation, and will be able to adopt a variety of *critical approaches* to them drawn from different disciplines within the subject area

Many also will:

A6 have acquired through an intellectually disciplined process an analytical knowledge of *Greek (ancient or mediaeval)* and/or Latin*, even where these are not compulsory elements in a programme of study (as they are not in some Ancient History and Classical Studies programmes, for example)

Those graduating from Modern Greek programmes will typically:

A7 have acquired a thorough *knowledge of* grammatical structures; a broad vocabulary and range of appropriate idioms; the ability to understand the

spoken language; the active production of appropriate written and spoken discourses; a sensitive knowledge of register; and translation skills both from and into *the Modern Greek language*.

3.3 General abilities, qualities of mind, transferable skills and intellectual virtues: predominantly cognitive

By virtue of study in the subject area, honours graduates will at the same time have acquired a further range of *general abilities and capacities, qualities of mind, transferable skills and intellectual virtues*. Preeminent among *cognitive attributes* fostered by study in the subject area are:

B1 a significant degree of *autonomy*, manifested in self-direction, self-discipline and intellectual initiative, both in learning and study and in management of the time devoted to them

B2 the capacity for *critical reflection* on the extent and limitations of how and what one has learned, discovered and understood

B3 the capacity for *critical judgment* in the light of evidence and argument

These qualities of mind presuppose a number of more specific abilities, listed here in an order representing the characteristic progress of some intellectual enquiries conducted in the subject area:

B4 *to gather, commit to memory, organise and deploy* evidence and information, and to show *awareness* of the consequences *of the unavailability of evidence*

B5 *to extract key elements* from complex information and to *identify and solve associated problems*

B6 *to select and apply appropriate methodologies* in assessing the meaning and significance of information

B7 to engage in *analytical and evaluative thinking* about texts, sources, arguments, and interpretations, independently estimating their relevance to the issue in question, discriminating between opposing theories, and forming judgments on the basis of evidence and argument

B8 to engage in *lateral thinking*, making connections between ideas and information in different fields of study

B9 to *marshal argument lucidly, coherently and concisely* both orally and in writing

B10 to display critical appreciation and judgement of literature and art.

3.4 General abilities, qualities of mind and transferable skills: predominantly practical

Honours graduates will typically by dint of study in the subject area, and often by participation in group activity, have acquired the practical ability:

B11 to *present material orally* in a clear and effective manner, using audio-visual aids when appropriate, and relating it to the concerns of the audience

B12 to *present material in written form*, with discrimination and lucidity in use of language, professional referencing, and clear and effective layout, including as appropriate tabular, diagrammatic or photographic presentation

B13 to work creatively, flexibly and adaptably with others

B14 to write and think under pressure and to meet deadlines

It is increasingly expected of honours graduates in the subject area that they will also be able:

B15 to deploy a range of basic IT resources effectively, such as word-processing the text of an essay with footnotes and basic formatting, using e-mail, using Powerpoint to make presentations, searching databases and text-files, and locating and exploiting websites

Some also will command:

B16 *modern foreign language skills*, especially reading ability* and graduates will have been given opportunity and encouragement to acquire them where appropriate to their academic needs.

4. Learning, teaching and assessment in Classics and Ancient History (including Byzantine Studies and Modern Greek)

4.1 Programme design

The principal consideration governing design of programmes of study in Classics and Ancient History is the nature of the subject matter to be learned and taught. Other considerations will include the knowledge and interests of members of the teaching staff in a given institution. This section of the benchmarking statement does not attempt to cover such aspects of programme design. It is concerned with one specific issue: consideration of how programmes may best enable students to acquire the personal attributes described in Section 3, and thereby exhibit fitness for that purpose in their arrangements for learning and teaching (particularly so far as concerns progression and study methods) and for assessment. The material in the section is mostly descriptive, and is intended to constitute broad guidance for institutions, external examiners and subject reviewers.

4.2 Progression

4.2.1 Starting-point and end-point

Arrangements for learning and teaching are generally conceived in the light of reflection on the *intellectual distance* students need to travel from their knowledge and abilities at entry to attainment of the attributes of an honours graduate. Different categories of student have different starting-points. Students entering higher education *from sixth-form or comparable studies* emerge with an experience of a heavily taught regime, in which the discipline required for learning is maintained primarily by teachers working to highly specific examination syllabuses. The endpoint of their university studies may be defined by contrast as an environment in which that *discipline has become mostly self-discipline*, and where study methods are developed and sustained primarily *by students taking on responsibility themselves for their own learning*, with support from teaching staff, in the context of much greater choice within the syllabus. *Mature students*, by contrast, often bring a self-disciplined approach to their studies from the outset, but need to acquire *academic self-confidence*.

4.2.2 Independent learning and acquisition of new skills

The principal specific desideratum for any honours degree programme is that at least in their final year students will have the opportunity to *engage independently in learning* and research with limited guidance and within a broad structure of courses, using and further developing the skills and abilities fostered in previous years. However as is apparent from Section 2, the subject area of Classics and Ancient History, with its great range of disciplines, is so rich in approaches which involve new ways of thinking for students that it is appropriate for there to be scope for higher and final year (or in Scotland Honours) students to devote a proportion of their course choices to study involving *the acquisition of knowledge, skills and abilities* in fields they have not so far explored.

4.2.2.1 Example: acquisition of language skills

To take a particular example of great importance, wherever possible it is highly desirable that students who wish it should be given opportunity and encouragement to acquire or improve linguistic skills in Greek (ancient, mediaeval or modern) and/or Latin - or in a Byzantine Studies programme eg Syriac or Hebrew - at this stage in their programme of study for an honours degree. Access to language modules which are appropriate for this purpose should not be denied to them solely on the ground that they are at an advanced level in their studies. Experience of these languages at any point in a programme may significantly *benefit command of other subject-specific abilities and forms of knowledge* characteristic of honours graduates in the subject area, as well as enhance development of more general abilities, such as the ability to *analyse the logical structure of means of communication*. Command of Greek and/or Latin is also an indispensable foundation for research degrees in many fields within the subject area and an invaluable asset for those entering Masters courses in it.

4.2.2.2 Example: classical or Byzantine art, or field archaeology

Other examples might be classical or Byzantine art, or field archaeology. For many students there will have been the opportunity to begin study of such subjects at an early stage in their honours degree programme, and some will go on to take more advanced and specialised options within them at later stages. In other well-designed programmes, however, this will not necessarily have been the case, and it may therefore be appropriate for higher and final year students to be offered the opportunity to begin study of classical or Byzantine art, or to gain experience of field archaeology.

4.2.3 Appropriate controls on learning and assessment

Such courses may have other learning objectives than acquisition of basic knowledge, and as such be comparable with other higher and final level courses. However, appropriate controls will need to be put in place. If courses involving the acquisition of basic knowledge are made available to higher or final year students, that element in them must not be so great a component of the year's work as to compromise the learning experience characteristic of that stage in their progression. Similarly, associated assessment procedures should bear some comparability with those used for other higher or final year (or in Scotland Honours) courses.

4.3 Study methods

4.3.1 Wide range of study methods

A *wide range of study methods* are practised within the subject area, and in a rapidly changing general environment for learning there is *considerable potential for new developments*, including use of databases, websites and other forms of computer-assisted learning. It is to be expected that a mixture of *formal and informal study methods* will be appropriate, and that a balance will be struck between *structured arrangements and students' own input* (cf. 4.2.1 above).

4.3.2 Examples of study methods

A typical honours graduate in the subject area will currently have had the opportunity to experience all or most of the following study methods:

- *essay-writing*, often conceived as the principal vehicle for the development of most of the abilities and forms of knowledge listed under A and B in Section 3
- various *forms of exercise* designed to develop the linguistic or critical or problem-solving skills identified under A and B, such as:
- *unprepared translation from Greek* (ancient or modern) or Latin
- *translation into Greek* (ancient or modern) and/or Latin
- *'practical' literary criticism*
- short critical commentaries (*'gobbets'*)

- *source analysis*
- the *identification of and/or commentary upon art objects*
- use of IT in course delivery (eg in computer-assisted language learning) and provision for the learning of *IT skills* in programmes within the subject area
- *seminars* or other forms of *small group* discussion, with or without *individual presentations*
- *one-to-one interaction*
- note-taking at *formal lectures*
- *projects jointly* undertaken with other students
- *reports* on investigations, whether undertaken independently or in the context of group discussion
- *analysis* of moving images (films etc.)
- *first hand analysis of material culture* in the field or in museums
- *revision* for formal examinations
- *dissertations or projects*, considered particularly valuable in encouraging self-direction and intellectual independence and initiative, as well as in requiring students to acquire research skills
- in Modern Greek *radio and television programmes, feature films and websites in Greek.*

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

- in Modern Greek *regular conversation practice* in the language is indispensable for proper development of ability to speak it, and a year abroad in Greece is highly desirable for those with no previous contact with the language
- in courses in art and archaeology, ancient history and Byzantine Studies direct contact with the material through eg *study tours, museum visits, experience of field-work, and the opportunity to handle artefacts* is highly desirable.

Some of the transferable skills specified under B11–16 may also be acquired or developed by *extra-curricular activity*, or through *ancillary courses* made available by institutions to students generally.

4.4 Methods of assessment

4.4.1 Wide variety of assessment methods

Methods of assessment commonly found associated with programmes in the subject area similarly exhibit a wide variety. It is for *institutions to decide on the appropriate form* of evidence they require in order to assess the level of student achievement. Two principles, however, should inform the assessment process:

- *Forms of evidence* required should relate primarily to the *outcomes** specified in Section 3, and particularly to the study methods chosen as appropriate for the development of the attributes characteristic of an honours graduate in the subject area (4.3).
- Programmes should include elements of both *formative and summative* assessment. 'Formative assessment' may be described as assessment which necessarily involves feedback arrangements; both assessment and feedback are often informal. 'Summative assessment' is invariably more formal, with feedback arrangements optional; grades assigned are entered into a student's academic record, where such records are in use, and these (or an appropriate subset of them) form the basis for the award of classified honours. It follows that a given example of student work - particularly *coursework* or a *dissertation* - may fall under both categories: in the teaching context under 'formative assessment', in connection with final honours degree assessment under 'summative'.

4.4.2 Assessment of general cognitive attributes: general remarks

The focus of the principal forms of assessment employed in the subject area will ordinarily be the *knowledge of the subject-matter* displayed by a student (A above). But since students will be unable to display knowledge without also displaying some or all of the *skills and abilities* listed under B4-9, they too can be directly or (as also eg in the case of research skills (A5)) indirectly assessed by the same forms of examination. It is common practice in the subject area for students to be subject to both formative and summative assessment of their abilities to *write essays* and *perform exercises* which will test linguistic or critical or problem-solving skills. Criteria of assessment will often be couched explicitly in terms of such skills and abilities. In Modern Greek *oral assessment* of the ability to speak and understand the language is also universally practised (A7). On the capacities and abilities tested by the preparation of *joint projects, reports* and *dissertations and projects* see below: these enable students to demonstrate a range of attributes, including autonomy, critical reflection and critical judgment (B1-3) in particular.

4.4.3 Assessment of practical abilities: general remarks

Many of the skills and abilities listed under B11–16 - eg presentational and IT skills, the ability to work effectively in collaboration with others eg in class performance - are commonly subject only to *formative assessment*. Proficiency in a modern foreign language (B16) may be certificated by institutions on the basis of a separate assessment procedure, not related to the examination structures in place in the subject area. Evidence that an

honours graduate in Classics, Ancient History, Byzantine Studies or Modern Greek has acquired eg skills and abilities listed under B11–16 may therefore also be supplied by such means as records of activities in *tutorial reports*, a *student profile*, or a *record of progress and achievement*, and made available to potential employers through academic references.

4.4.4 Specific forms of summative assessment

Summative assessment takes different forms, all focused in the first instance on students' knowledge of subject-matter (A1-3, 6-7):

- in-course tests of language skills
- formal written 'unseen' *examinations* - well suited also to assessment of the skills and abilities listed under A4-5 and B4-9; require students to work and think under pressure (B14); particularly appropriate for the testing of linguistic skills (A6-7)
- *open-book* and *take-away* written examinations - these have most but not all of the same properties (they may not be appropriate for testing all linguistic skills (A6-7))
- assessment by *course-work* and by submission of *dissertations and projects* - will require students to submit prepared work; tests also the ability to work under pressure and meet deadlines (B14), as well as the skills and abilities listed under A4-5 and B4-9; may enable students to make better display of a broad knowledge of subject matter (A2) than they are often capable of in unseen examinations.
- *oral* examinations - particularly appropriate for testing knowledge of primary materials such as art objects (A3) and the ability to understand and converse in a spoken foreign language (A7)

In general, use of a variety of forms of summative assessment can help to exploit the strengths of each while counteracting the disadvantages to which each is prone.

5 Standards of attainment in Classics and Ancient History (including Byzantine Studies and Modern Greek)

5.1 Attributes of honours graduates: standards of attainment

A statement representing general expectations about standards for the award of an honours degree in Classics and Ancient History might take various forms. As indicated in 1.4, this statement is couched in terms of the personal attributes of honours graduates, and more specifically in terms of *minimal and typical attainment*. The abilities and forms of knowledge characteristic of honours graduates in the subject area have been identified in Section 3 above. Graduates will have acquired most or a majority of these, but in different degrees and from different vantage points depending on differences

in programmes of study and in individual pathways through them as well as on personal circumstances and capacities.

5.2 Assessment and standards of attainment

Standards are assured through the assessment procedures discussed in Section 4. In order to graduate with honours, students are currently required to satisfy examiners that their performance across a range of pieces of work, presented for assessment on occasions separated by a period or periods of time, meets the required standard for award of the degree at a particular class of honours. The extent of their ability to demonstrate the graduate attributes listed in 5.2 is therefore to be measured relative to that performance in most cases, although for some attributes (eg B11 and 13) summative assessment is often thought inappropriate, and others are commonly not assessed at all (eg B15 and 16). In such cases other forms of reporting are sometimes employed. There are both quantitative and qualitative aspects to be taken into consideration: how many attributes students exhibit and how often, how well they exhibit them, and how far they exhibit them singly or in some form of integration. Different considerations apply to tests of linguistic competence from those applicable to other kinds of work presented for assessment. Tests of linguistic competence necessarily concentrate on a particular subset of attributes - principally those listed as A1,3,4, 6 and 7, and B3, 5, 8 and 12. Other kinds of work presented give opportunities for demonstration of a wider range of attributes.

5.4 Minimal or threshold attainment

Honours graduates of overall minimal attainment will have demonstrated *some degree of proficiency* in a majority of the attributes listed in 5.2. To take some examples, evidence of proficiency will have been provided if a graduate has demonstrated in some degree:

- understanding of key features of another culture (A1)
- familiarity with the most important primary materials relevant to a topic (A3)
- awareness of more than one viewpoint or approach in discussing a topic (A5)
- ability to make some assessment of his or her own progress and to ask for help when needed (B2)
- ability to focus on the essentials of an issue (B5)
- ability to present largely expository material in written form (B9)
- ability to perform assigned tasks within a group setting and to take part in group discussion (B13)

- ability to exploit a range of basic IT resources effectively (B15)

Most of the attributes demonstrated by a graduate of overall minimal attainment will have been evidenced in several pieces of work presented for assessment. On some of these occasions a number of them will have been demonstrated in an integrated way. For example, a written examination answer on the Peloponnesian War may while expounding some historical material (B9) provide evidence also of ability to focus on the essentials of an issue (B5). At the same time it may show familiarity with Thucydides, the main primary source (A3), and exhibit an awareness of more than one view about the historical value of the speeches he attributes to leading politicians (A5).

5.5 Typical attainment

Honours graduates of overall typical attainment* will have demonstrated a *clear competence* in most of the attributes listed in 5.2. Evidence of clear competence will have been provided with respect to examples parallelling those chosen in 5.4 if a graduate has demonstrated:

- understanding of a range of more and less familiar features of another culture (A1)
- familiarity with an appropriate and diverse range of primary materials relevant to a topic (A3)
- understanding of different viewpoints, and ability to adopt different approaches in discussing a topic (A5)
- ability to make an accurate assessment of his or her own progress, and to identify and formulate issues on which help is needed (B2)
- ability to extract key elements from complex information, and to identify and solve associated problems (B5)
- ability to marshal argument lucidly, coherently and concisely (B9)
- ability to work in groups as an active participant who contributes effectively to the group's task (B13)

A graduate of overall typical attainment is likely also to have achieved a degree of proficiency in respect of:

- ability to exploit a range of basic IT resources effectively (B15)

Most of the attributes demonstrated by a graduate of overall typical attainment will have been evidenced on a majority of those occasions where there was opportunity to exhibit them. On most occasions where they have been exhibited, a number of them will have been demonstrated in an integrated way. Where the opportunity presents itself, as for example with projects, reports or dissertations or in some final year unseen examinations,

there will have been clear evidence of autonomy (B1), critical reflection (B2) and critical judgment (B3).

5.6 Interpreting standards

The concepts 'some degree of proficiency' and 'a clear competence' which govern the formulations in 5.4 and 5.5 are clearly subject to interpretation. It is for institutions, external examiners and subject reviewers to satisfy themselves that appropriate interpretations are being applied in assessment or reporting procedures within individual programmes. The notion of overall minimal or typical attainment is best regarded as a holistic concept: as attempting to articulate an expectation about the standard at which personal attributes as a whole have been exhibited. In order to measure such attainment disaggregation of attributes is useful and unavoidable. But *the honours graduate is above all a person who can deploy his or her knowledge, abilities and skills in their entirety, displaying balance and judgment in a variety of circumstances.*

* For Modern Greek see A7 below.

* For the language skills of Modern Greek programmes see A7 above.

* The term 'outcome' expresses the notion of what a student comes to know or understand or becomes able to do in consequence of a process of learning.

* 'Typical attainment' is here understood as the achievement characteristically associated with the median point of the mark distribution in an assessment. The benchmarking group have interpreted this as equivalent to the standard achieved by a person graduating towards the bottom of Class II.I within their own institutions.