

# MA in Contemporary English Language and Linguistics

Awarding Institution:	The University of Reading
Teaching Institution:	The University of Reading
Faculty of Arts & Humanities	Programme length: 12 months For students entering in 2003 Date of specification: 29/04/03, rev. 21/01/04
Programme Director:	Dr R. Ingham
Board of Studies:	MA in Contemporary English Language & Linguistics
Accreditation:	N/A

## Summary of programme aims

Based on the principles of descriptive linguistics, to provide a wide and full account of grammatical, phonological, lexical and discoursal features of contemporary English and to examine social varieties of English. Students will be familiarized with recent and current ways of describing the grammatical, lexical, phonological and discoursal features of English; they will be enabled to evaluate critically a range of current developments in the study of the contemporary English language against the background of current perspectives in linguistics. A further aim is to develop expertise in undertaking and evaluating research into the linguistic description of English.

## Transferable skills

- to evaluate methodologies and where appropriate, develop critiques of them and to propose new hypotheses, to deal with complex issues both systematically and creatively, make sound judgements in the absence of complete data, and communicate their conclusions clearly to varied audiences
- to demonstrate self direction and originality in tackling and solving problems, and act autonomously in planning and implementing tasks at a professional or equivalent level. As part of this it is expected that students will display some initiative and personal responsibility, as well as an independent learning ability required for continuing intellectual development.

## Programme content

The MACELL programme consists of a combination of core (compulsory) modules, and option modules which are selected from a range of available subjects within the School. The structure of the programme allows students some flexibility in following their own interests within a general framework.

The compulsory modules cover the Foundation areas of phonetics/phonology syntax and semantics. There are also compulsory modules in English Grammar & Lexis and Varieties of English. There is a research seminar and dissertation of 15,000 words.

The option modules cover a wide range of descriptive linguistic and applied areas, and, together with the dissertation, provide the opportunity for specialization in areas of particular interest.

The following list specifies both compulsory and option modules. In addition to the 120 credits gained through compulsory modules, students select a further 60 credits from option modules.

**Masters Level (three terms)** *Credits Level*

*Compulsory modules*

**Autumn Term**

LSMSY1	<i>Foundation Syntax</i>	10	M
LSMPH1	<i>Foundation Phonetics &amp; Phonology</i>	10	M
LSMSM1	<i>Foundation Semantics</i>	10	M
LSMGL	<i>English Grammar &amp; Lexis</i>	10	M

**Spring Term:**

LSMRT	<i>Research Topics in English Grammar</i>	10	M
LSMVES	<i>Varieties of English</i>	10	M

**Summer term and vacation**

LSMDIC	<i>Research and Dissertation (MACELL)</i>	60	M
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*Option modules*

Students select three option modules, each of 20 credits, in Autumn and Spring Terms:

**Autumn Term**

LSMST	<i>Statistics for Language Studies</i>	20	M
LSMNO	<i>Aspects of Norwegian</i>	20	M
LSMCD	<i>Child Language Development</i>	20	M
LSMDA	<i>Discourse Analysis</i>	20	M
LSMIP	<i>Issues in Phonetics &amp; Phonology</i>	20	M
LSMSO	<i>Sociolinguistics</i>	20	M
LSMTU	<i>Typology &amp; Universals</i>	20	M
LSMLP	<i>Language Pathology</i>	20	M

**Spring Term**

LSMAA	<i>Linguistic Aspects of Aphasia</i>	20	M
LSMFL	<i>First Language Acquisition</i>	20	M
LSMSYL	<i>Syntax</i>	20	M
LSMLT	<i>Applied Linguistics &amp; Language Teaching</i>	20	M
LSMPS	<i>Psycholinguistics</i>	20	M
LSMPY	<i>Language Play</i>	20	M
LSMVC	<i>Language Variation &amp; Change</i>	20	M
LSMMG	<i>Aspects of Modern Greek</i>	20	M
LSMCA	<i>Corpora in Applied Linguistics</i>	20	M
LSMST	<i>Stylistics and the Teaching of Literature</i>	20	M

Modules running in the Autumn term will be assessed by assignments to be completed over the Christmas vacation; modules running in the Spring term will be assessed by assignments to be completed over the Easter vacation or by tests in the first week of the Summer Term. The dissertation will be submitted by 7th September.

**Part-time/Modular arrangements**

The course may be completed on a full-time basis, in which case the normal period for completion is 12 months. An alternative to full-time study involves the completion of the taught components and the dissertation on a credit-accumulation basis part-time or modular over a period of up to six years. Such an arrangement allows participants considerable flexibility to fit the degree around other commitments. UK-based applicants, for example, may be able to attend

on a couple of days a week only and can gradually complete obligatory and optional components over more than one year. Applicants who are based overseas may be able to obtain leave for one term at a time, and may complete the required components by returning in subsequent years.

### **Progression Requirements**

The University's taught postgraduate marks classification is as follows:

<u>Mark</u>	<u>Interpretation</u>
70 – 100%	Distinction
60 – 69%	Merit
50 – 59%	Good standard (Pass)
<u>Failing categories:</u>	
40 – 49%	Work below threshold standard
0 – 39%	Unsatisfactory Work

#### *For Masters Degrees*

To pass the degree of Master students must gain an average mark of 50 or more overall including a mark of 50 or more for the dissertation and have no mark below 40 in compulsory modules LSMSY1, LSMPH1, LSMSM1, LSMGL, LSMRT, and LSMVES. In addition the total credit value of all modules marked below 40 must not exceed 30 credits and for all modules marked below 50 must be less than 60 credits.\*

Students who gain an average mark of 70 or more overall including a mark of 70 or more for the dissertation and have no mark below 40 will be eligible for a Distinction. Those gaining an average mark of 60 or more overall including a mark of 60 or more for the dissertation and have no mark below 40 will be awarded eligible for a Merit.

#### *For Postgraduate Diplomas*

To pass the Postgraduate Diploma students must gain an average mark of 50 or more and have no mark below 40 in compulsory modules LSMSY1, LSMPH1, LSMSM1, LSMGL, LSMRT, and LSMVES. In addition the total credit value of all modules marked below 40 must not exceed 30 credits and for all modules marked below 50 must be less than 60 credits.\*

Students who gain an average mark of 70 or more and have no mark below 40 will be eligible for the award of a Distinction. Those gaining an average mark of 60 or more and have no mark below 40 will be awarded eligible for a Merit.

#### *For Postgraduate Certificate*

To pass the Postgraduate Certificate students must gain an average mark of 50 or more and have no mark below 40 in modules LSMSY1, LSMPH1, LSMSM1, LSMGL, LSMRT, and LSMVES. In addition the total credit value of all modules marked below 40 must not exceed 10 credits.\*

\*The provision to permit a candidate to be passed overall with a profile containing marks below 40 is made subject to the condition that there is evidence that the candidate applied himself or herself to the work of those modules with reasonable diligence and has not been absent from the examination without reasonable cause.

### **Summary of teaching and assessment**

The structure of this MA course is modular. Each module is relatively self-contained (although a module may serve as a pre-requisite for another), and is independently assessed. There are no formal final examinations at the end of the course.

The course may be completed on a full-time basis, in which case the normal period for completion is 12 months. Normally students begin the course at the beginning of the academic year, that is in October, and complete all taught components by April or June. The dissertation is then completed during the Summer months. For their dissertation MACELL students are required to undertake the close study of an aspect of contemporary English.

Assessment is by means of a presentation for the seminar, written assignment for all other modules of the course, and a 15,000 word dissertation. Modules are taught by lectures, seminars and small group practical work. The dissertation module is additionally supported by individual supervision.

### **Admission requirements**

Entrants to this programme are normally required to have obtained a 2/1 or upper 2/2 Honours degree in a subject relevant to the course.

All entrants to the programme will be required to meet the Faculty's English language proficiency standards. Where UK GCSE examinations in English (or their equivalent) have not been passed, these standards are normally represented by a minimum overall band of 7.0 on the IELTS test, with no sub-test band below 6.5, or an equivalent score on another standard test recognised by the University.

**Admissions Tutor:** Programme director.

### **Support for students and their learning**

University support for students and their learning falls into two categories:

(1) Learning support includes resources provided by the IT Services Department, which has several hundred computers, and the University Library, which across its three sites holds over a million volumes, including 14,000 theoretical and applied linguistics titles, and subscribes to around 4,000 current periodicals, of which 60 are in theoretical and applied linguistics. These library facilities provide excellent coverage of the field of language and linguistics in the humanities, social sciences and education. The main University Library has a range of electronic sources of information and houses the Student Access to Independent Learning (S@IL) computer-based teaching and learning facilities. There are language laboratory facilities both for those students studying on a language degree and for those taking modules offered by the Institution-wide Language Programme. Further facilities that are campus-wide include the Statistics Advisory Service and the Statistical Computing Advisory Service.

(2) Student guidance and welfare support is provided by Programme Directors, Personal Tutors, the Careers Advisory Service, the University's Special Needs Advisor, Study Advisors, Hall Wardens and the Students' Union.

Within the School, there are considerable computing and technical facilities, including a large and well-equipped Speech Research Laboratory offering facilities for work in acoustic, articulatory and physiological aspects of speech, and supported by a range of computational and electronic hardware. In 2001, the School set up a Language Acquisition Laboratory with the aid of a University grant. There is also a PC-based Corpus Facility, locally networked through Sun workstations and offering access to all well-known language corpora, e.g. the BNC, and databases such as the MRC Psycholinguistic Database, as well as a number of our own research databases; it also provides advanced computational techniques for stimulus presentation and response analysis. The School's computers host major statistical packages, such as Minitab and SPSS.

The School employs a full-time technical officer, who deals with the purchase and maintenance of computers, software and audio-visual equipment. There is also a School Library, which houses 10,000 titles in ELT and other applied linguistic areas and subscribes to 50 journals. Now that it

contains the former British Council ELT library, it is probably the largest collection of its kind in the country.

Each student is provided with a course handbook which contains full details of the degree programme, the staff and facilities in the School of Linguistics and Applied Language Studies, and a range of useful information including advice on preparation and presentation of written work, especially the dissertation, dates of terms and examinations, and assessment procedures and criteria. Each student is also provided with a Catalogue of core and option modules available to them, giving outlines and assessment details. The Programme Director and/or Personal Tutors will advise students on selection of modules, and on general matters related to learning and assessment. In addition, a series of Study Skills classes is provided in the Autumn Term to give guidance on note-taking and assignment preparation and writing. Module lecturers will advise students on preparation for their assignments or examinations.

### **Career prospects**

The course is not vocationally oriented, but has often been taken by language professionals in a number of areas.

### **Opportunities for study abroad or for placements**

N/A

### **Educational aims of the programme**

To achieve knowledge and understanding of the course content and a degree of independent competence in its applicability to the wider study of the English language

A systematic understanding of knowledge, and a critical awareness of current problems and/or new insights, much of which is at the forefront of the academic discipline;

The demonstration of some originality in the application of knowledge, together with a practical understanding of how established techniques of research and enquiry are used to create and interpret knowledge in the discipline

The ability to evaluate critically current research and advanced scholarship in the discipline.

## Programme Outcomes

### *Knowledge and Understanding*

<p><b>A. Knowledge and understanding of:</b></p> <p>Terms, concepts and issues taught in the following modules:</p> <p>LSMFD      Foundation Course The foundational concepts of phonology, syntax and semantics</p> <p>LSMEGL      English Grammar and Lexis A functional description of English grammar and a description of lexical relations and patterns.</p> <p>LSMRTE Research Topics in English. A range of English semantic and grammatical topics recently investigated by researchers.</p> <p>LSMSTL Stylistics and the Teaching of Literature Language styles and their implications for the teaching of literature.</p> <p>LSMVE Varieties of English How English varies along linguistic dimensions.</p> <p><u>AND:</u> four option modules, plus:</p> <p><u>Dissertation:</u> Different types of research, requirements of effective research, techniques of data-gathering and analysis, requirements of academic dissertations in this field.</p>	<p><b>Teaching/learning methods and strategies</b></p> <p>Lectures seminars and practical sessions.</p>  <p><i>Assessment</i></p> <p>4 long assessments 4 short assessments</p>
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*Skills and other attributes*

<p><b>B. Intellectual skills – able to:</b></p> <p>Understand and reproduce information Assess relevance of information Analyse data Evaluate claims in the light of data</p>	<p><b>Teaching/learning methods and strategies</b></p> <p>Lectures, seminars and practicals</p> <p><i>Assessment</i></p> <p>3 tests 8 written assignments dissertation</p>
<p><b>C. Practical skills – able to:</b></p> <p>Different skill may be acquired depending on specific modules, e.g. experimental phonetics.</p>	<p><b>Teaching/learning methods and strategies</b></p> <p>N/A other than in specific modules, e.g. experimental phonetics</p> <p><i>Assessment</i></p> <p>N/A other than in specific modules, e.g. experimental phonetics</p>
<p><b>D. Transferable skills – able to:</b></p> <p>Understand and reproduce information Assess relevance of information Analyse data Evaluate claims in the light of data</p>	<p><b>Teaching/learning methods and strategies</b></p> <p>Lectures, seminars and practicals</p> <p><i>Assessment</i></p> <p>N/A except as above</p>

*Please note:* This specification provides a concise summary of the main features of the programme and the learning outcomes that a typical student might reasonably expect to achieve and demonstrate if he/she takes full advantage of the learning opportunities that are provided. More detailed information on the learning outcomes, content and teaching, learning and assessment methods of each module can be found in module and programme handbooks.