

MA in Linguistic Research

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: 01/10/03
Programme Director:	Dr Paul Kerswill
Board of Studies:	MA in Linguistic Research
Accreditation:	Economic and Social Research Council

Summary of programme aims

This programme is intended as intensive training for those wishing to pursue doctoral studies in Linguistics, Applied Linguistics and Clinical Linguistics. The programme is suitable for those with higher qualifications in any of these areas, or a related area. It has been recognised by the Economic and Social Research Council as the first year of a 1+3 programme leading to a PhD; as such, it is intended for those pursuing empirical and applied areas of linguistics (see under 'Programme content' below and Section 2.10 of the ESRC's downloadable *Guidance Notes for Applicants* for details of ESRC-fundable areas). However, the programme is by no means restricted to ESRC-funded students.

Transferable skills

The programme has been conceived as the first year of a four-year doctoral programme in linguistics, and is recognised as such by the ESRC. Transferable skills are to be seen in relation to this overall conception, and are as follows:

- practical skills in the analysis of language
- an ability to derive research questions from a body of relevant literature
- an ability to design a substantial piece of research, both for an MA dissertation and a PhD thesis
- the ability to synthesise, analyse and evaluate information and theoretical claims
- critical skills (demonstrated both in written presentations and in the oral evaluation of the work of fellow students and others)
- written communication skills (ranging from report writing, through medium-length essays evaluating arguments, to large-scale sustained argumentation)
- oral communication skills (to different types of audience and in different formats)
- ability to apply a range of data handling and analysis techniques, including statistical analysis
- interpersonal skills and skills in project management and teamwork
- bibliographic skills (library, searches, Internet, and referencing and indexing software)
- an understanding of ethical issues in research
- an understanding of intellectual property rights

Programme content

Students choose one of three pathways through the programme: Linguistics, Applied Linguistics or Clinical Linguistics. Within each pathway, there is a degree of flexibility achieved through the choice of particular option modules.

The 180 credits of the programme are distributed as follows:

- 30 credits drawing on generic **social science training modules** provided centrally by the University but supplemented by the School
- 90 credits delivered as taught modules by SLALS
 - For Linguistics and Applied Linguistics Pathways, 50 of these credits are composed of **compulsory modules**, relating both to research methods training and to the development of subject-specific knowledge. The remaining 40 credits are divided among **two option modules** which allow the student to specialise in fields close to their proposed research topic.
 - For the Clinical Linguistics Pathway, 70 credits are composed of **compulsory modules**, relating both to research methods training and to the development of subject-specific knowledge. The remaining 20 credits are devoted to **one option module** which allow the student to specialise in a field close to their proposed research topic.
- 60 credits are allocated to a 15,000-word **dissertation**, handed in in September.

Students choose a pathway reflecting their intended specialism, in consultation with their supervisor and the Director of Research. Most students plan to conduct research in one of three ESRC-fundable areas: **linguistics** (especially sociolinguistics, psycholinguistics and first language acquisition), **applied linguistics** (especially first and second language teaching, second language acquisition, language education and policy and discourse analysis), and **clinical linguistics** (especially specific language impairment, motor disorders and aphasia). The differences between the three pathways lie in:

- (1) The compulsory foundation course(s)
- (2) The subject-specific research training module
- (3) Choice of option modules

Compulsory modules

Autumn term

All pathways:

		<i>Credits</i>	<i>Level</i>
LSMSA	<i>Statistics in Language Studies</i>	10	M
LSMILR	<i>Issues in Linguistic Research</i>	10	M

Linguistics pathway foundation modules:

Students choose two of:

LSMSY1	<i>Foundation Syntax</i>	10	M
LSMPH1	<i>Foundation Phonetics & Phonology</i>	10	M
LSMSM1	<i>Foundation Semantics</i>	10	M

Applied Linguistics pathway foundation modules:

LSMDT	<i>Discourse Analysis for Language Teachers</i>	10	M
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Students choose one of:

LSMPH1	<i>Foundation Phonetics & Phonology</i>	10	M
LSMGL	<i>English Grammar & Lexis</i>	10	M

Clinical Linguistics pathway foundation modules:

LSMRDC	<i>Research Design in Clinical Linguistics</i>	10	M
LSMLP	<i>Language Pathology</i>	20	M

Students choose two of:

LSMSY1	<i>Foundation Syntax</i>	10	M
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LSMPH1	<i>Foundation Phonetics & Phonology</i>	10	M
LSMSM1	<i>Foundation Semantics</i>	10	M

Autumn and Spring terms

All pathways:

EDMES1	<i>Essentials of Research Methods</i>	20	M
EDMES2	<i>General Research Skills & Transferable Skills</i>	10	M

Linguistics and Applied Linguistics Pathways:

LSMPRO	<i>Full Dissertation Proposal</i>	10	M
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Summer term and Vacation

All pathways:

LSMDIR	<i>Dissertation (MALR)</i>	60	M
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Option modules

Students choose two option modules (Linguistics and Applied Linguistics) or one option module (Clinical Linguistics). According to the student's pathway, these choices are made as follows:

Pathway	Option One	Option Two
	A pathway-specific option to be selected from:	A non-pathway-specific option to be selected from:
Linguistics	options marked 'L'	Any option listed, unless marked by * as restricted to a different pathway from the student's own
Applied Linguistics	options marked 'A'	
Assessment:	20 credits	20 credits

Clinical Linguistics Pathway	Any option listed, unless marked by * as restricted to a pathway other than clinical linguistics
Assessment:	20 credits

Option modules are as follows. The pathway associated with each option is indicated by the letter in the first column: L = Linguistics, A = Applied Linguistics, C = Clinical Linguistics. Where a module is exclusive to students following a particular pathway, this is indicated by * placed after the letter. Students may not choose as an option a module they have taken as a compulsory module.

Three Spring Term options in advanced statistical techniques are offered to MALR students by the Sociology Department. Students must discuss their intention to take these modules with the MALR Programme Director at the beginning of the Autumn Term.

Autumn Term

L	LSMGLL	<i>English Grammar and Lexis</i>	20	M
L	LSMCL	<i>Child Language Development</i>	20	M
L	LSMDA	<i>Discourse Analysis</i>	20	M
L	LSMIP	<i>Issues in Phonetics & Phonology</i>	20	M
L	LSMSO	<i>Sociolinguistics</i>	20	M
A	LSMSL	<i>Second Language Learning Principles</i>	20	M
A*	LSMAPL	<i>Introduction to Applied Linguistics</i>	20	M

Spring term

C	LSMAA	<i>Linguistic Aspects of Aphasia</i>	20	M
C	LSMSI	<i>Specific Language Impairment</i>	20	M
C	LSMMS	<i>Motor Speech Disorders</i>	20	M
L	LSMFL	<i>First Language Acquisition</i>	20	M
L	LSMIS	<i>Issues in Syntax & Semantics</i>	20	M
L	LSMLT	<i>Applied Linguistics & Language Teaching</i>	20	M
L	LSMPL	<i>Psycholinguistics</i>	20	M
L	LSMPY	<i>Language Play</i>	20	M
L	LSMRTL	<i>Research Topics in English Grammar</i>	20	M
L	LSMVE	<i>Varieties of English</i>	20	M
L	LSMVC	<i>Language Variation & Change</i>	20	M
L	LSMMG	<i>Aspects of Modern Greek</i>	20	M
A	LSMIC	<i>Intercultural Communication</i>	20	M
A*	LSMLCL	<i>Language Curriculum Design</i>	20	M
A*	LSMCR	<i>Classroom Language Research</i>	20	M
A*	LSMTP	<i>Language Testing Principles</i>	20	M
A*	LSMWL	<i>Written Language (Reading & Writing)</i>	20	M
A	LSNCA	<i>Corpora in Applied Linguistics</i>	20	M

Two of the following:

L	LSMPH2	<i>Phonetics</i>	10	M
L	LSMPN2	<i>Phonology</i>	10	M
L	LSMSY2	<i>Syntax</i>	10	M
L	LSMSM2	<i>Semantics & Pragmatics</i>	10	M
	SOMSR0	<i>Association and Multiple Regression</i>	10	M
	SOMNAL	<i>Categorical Data Analysis</i>	10	M
	SOMWAC	<i>Content Analysis</i>	10	M

Summer Term

A*	LSMSP	<i>Spoken Language (Listening & Speaking)</i>	20	M
A*	LSMYL	<i>Teaching Young Learners</i>	20	M
A*	LSMIT	<i>Information Technology for Language Teaching</i>	20	M
A*	LSMES	<i>English for Specific Purposes</i>	20	M
A	LSMST	<i>Stylistics and the Teaching of Literature</i>	20	M

Part-time/Modular arrangements

Part-time and modular schemes are not available at present to ESRC students, though it is expected that such recognition will be gained during 2003.

The programme is offered on a part-time basis, normally over a period of up to 24 months, and on a modular basis normally over a period of 3-4 years, but with a maximum of 6 years. The structure of these arrangements is as follows:

Part-time (24 months):

- Year 1: Foundation course in Linguistics (C and L pathways)
 Discourse Analysis, English Phonetics & Phonology, English Grammar & Lexis (A pathway)
 One option module
- Year 2: Research design modules; one option module; General Research Skills & Transferable Skills; Dissertation

Modular:

Years 1-3: All modules except Dissertation

Year 4: Dissertation

Note: students may switch from full-time to modular status at the end of the Spring Term to complete the dissertation. They will then have one year to complete the dissertation, and any option modules not taken by that point.

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 modules LSMRDC and LSMPRO. 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. 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. 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

Modules are taught by lectures, seminars and small group practical work. One, Essentials of Research Methods, is taught via the web. The Dissertation module additionally is supported by individual supervision. The majority of modules are assessed wholly by coursework, while some are assessed by examination or by a mixture of the two. Full details are given in the module descriptions.

Admission requirements

Entrants to this programme are normally required to have obtained a 2.1 degree (or equivalent) in Linguistics or a related subject, especially one allied to the student's intended research area.

Admissions Tutor: Dr Paul Kerswill

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 pure and applied linguistics titles, and subscribes to around 4,000 current periodicals, of which 60 are in pure 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 Speech and Language Therapy Clinic within the School's Communication Disorders Centre functions partly as a community clinic for the local area health authority, while offering a specialist linguistic assessment service. It also supports a teaching and research facility including a large resource of tests and assessments, and audio and video recordings of a wide range of language disorders.

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

Since the programme is primarily intended as research training, the focus must be on the outcomes in this area. Students will be fully equipped to undertake doctoral research in particular branches of linguistics. However, it is also envisaged that the skills acquired (specialist and generic) will be applicable to careers involving research management, such as government and market research.

Opportunities for study abroad or for placements

None.

Educational aims of the programme

The principal aim of the programme is to prepare students for research in particular, mainly but not exclusively, empirical areas of linguistics at doctoral level. More specifically, it aims: to provide broadly-based research training in social science and linguistics, enabling students to understand and evaluate research conducted both outside and within their own area; to enable students to understand a wide range of research methodologies, applying a subset of these relevant to their own research; to ensure that students acquire a solid foundation in descriptive linguistics and a detailed knowledge of the sub-field in which they are working; to enable students to derive research questions from a body of relevant literature; to enable students to design a substantial piece of research; to give students the ability to synthesise, analyse and evaluate information and theoretical claims; to improve students' critical skills and communications skills; to enable students to use a range of technological and IT resources necessary for their particular research; to give students advanced bibliographic skills.

In summary, its main aims are:

- to provide broadly-based research training in social science and linguistics, enabling students to understand and evaluate research conducted both outside and within their own area
- to enable students to understand a wide range of research methodologies, and to apply a subset of these relevant to their own research
- to ensure that students acquire a solid foundation in descriptive linguistics and a detailed knowledge of the sub-field in which they are working
- to provide students with a range of transferable skills for research and in areas of work outside academia.

Programme Outcomes

Knowledge and Understanding

A. Knowledge and understanding of:

1. Paradigms in social science research, particularly the nature of and relationship between qualitative and quantitative research
2. Contemporary descriptive linguistics, with coverage depending on the pathway chosen
3. Detailed subject-specific substantive knowledge
4. Current issues in the student's intended research subject

**Teaching/learning methods and strategies**

Web delivery – self-study module Essentials of Research Methods
Lectures

Assessment

Short (2,000-word) and Long (4,000-word) assignments in the form of essays and/or projects
Examination
Dissertation

Skills and other attributes**B. Intellectual skills – able to:**

1. Develop a coherent and logical discussion
2. Analyse and solve problems
3. Operationalise abstract concepts for testing of hypotheses
4. Assimilate rapidly-evolving concepts
5. Synthesise and evaluate information from different sources
6. Generalise knowledge and methods from one area of study to others
7. Apply theoretical concepts and research-based information to the handling of subject-specific problems and issues
8. Plan, carry out and present an extended independent investigation of a research topic
9. Evaluate theory in the light of data

**Teaching/learning methods and strategies**

Lectures
Seminars, with occasional student presentations
Tutorials

Assessment

Assignments (essays or projects)
Examinations
Dissertation

C. Practical skills – able to:

1. Perform a grammatical analysis of some spoken or written text of English or another language
2. Carry out a statistical analysis of language or language-related data, using appropriate descriptive and/or inferential statistics

Different specific skills will be acquired depending on pathway and option modules taken. These may include:

3. Derive information from electronic linguistic corpora
4. Transcribe a recording of spoken English using the International Phonetic Alphabet

**Teaching/learning methods and strategies**

Lectures
Seminars
Tutorials

Assessment

Practical sections in assignments and examinations
Relevant sections in the dissertation

D. Transferable skills – able to:

1. Use IT, including word processing and standard and statistical software
2. Define a research topic and mount a principled investigation by means of the formulation of research questions and the establishment of an appropriate methodology
3. Give oral presentations
4. Present arguments cogently in writing
5. Take a critical stance to literature read
6. Apply a range of bibliographic resources, including use of electronic resources
7. Manage time
8. Evaluate ethical issues in research
9. Manage research
10. Interpersonal skills

Teaching/learning methods and strategies

Lectures
Seminars
Tutorials
Web-based *Essentials of Research* module

Assessment

Oral presentation to a Research Group.

Dissertation

Items 1, 6 and 7 are assessed under the organisation and presentation criteria for marking assignments and the dissertation.

Items 8, 9 and 10 are assessed through a personal portfolio as part of the *General Research Skills and Transferable Skills* module

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.