

Working with the English subject benchmark statement: resource overview

Collection: The Subject & Pedagogy

Learning outcomes

After completing this activity you or your students will be familiar with the English Subject Benchmark Statement and therefore with the core values and features of studying for and achieving an honours degree in English. Further, you or your students will be familiar with the way the English Subject Benchmark Statement is useful to distinct members of the subject community. After completing this activity you or your students will also have gained:

1. clearer insight into the challenges presented by the subject, its ways of thought, of writing, of arguing, of quoting;
2. a framework in which to enact a critical understanding of curriculum and assess its current fitness for purpose;
3. the raw material (and possibly confidence) to propose and argue to colleagues for a new module or form of assessment, or of teaching based on the relevant components of the benchmark statement.

Overview

The English Subject Benchmark Statement is an 11-page document which makes explicit the general academic characteristics and standards of an undergraduate honours degrees in English in the UK. (There are over 70 benchmark statements, covering every major subject, and you can access them from the QAA website.) Written by senior academics in the discipline who were nominated by CCUE (the Subject Association), the English benchmark is an excellent starting place for individual lecturers, Heads of Departments or departments working collectively on tasks like curriculum design and



1 | This resource is part of a set of professional development resources for Higher Education English (including English Literature, English Language & Creative Writing) called 'The Pool'. The resources were developed by the English Subject Centre in 2011 as part of a JISC/HEA Open Educational Resources (OER) Project.

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curriculum review. While not attempting to confine or standardise the specific content of English degrees, the Benchmark does offer a mechanism by which academics, students and increasingly, parents and employers, can gain a basic understanding of what will happen on a degree and what the student who has earned an English honours BA will have learned, such as the nature and scope of English, subject-specific skills and generic graduate skills.

The English Benchmark explicitly acknowledges the diversity of English degree programmes as a major strength and is therefore designed as a framework that can accommodate variety and innovation in the delivery of English and English-related modules. As such the Benchmark does not touch on specific curricular choices that individual programmes or lecturers might make. Ideally the Benchmark will be also used to provoke debate when the direction or emphasis of a module or degree is up for review or evaluation. The Benchmark is therefore designed to be a key resource for lecturers no matter what role or career stage they occupy. The following exercise is an opportunity to 'drill down' in the Benchmark document in order to gain an understanding of how the Benchmark might be useful to a range of constituents.

Activities within this resource

- Using the English Benchmark (Group activity)
 - Using the English Benchmark (Individual activity)
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Resources in the *Subject and Pedagogy* Collection

- Subject and pedagogy: introduction to the collection
- **Working with the English subject benchmark statement: resource overview (* you are here)**
 - Using the English subject benchmark: group activity
 - Using the English subject benchmark: individual activity
- Working with the Creative Writing subject benchmark statement: resource overview
 - Using the Creative Writing subject benchmark: group activity
 - Using the Creative Writing subject benchmark: individual activity
- Writing and the teacher: resource overview
 - Writing tasks: group activity
 - Metaphors: group activity
- Hearing yourself teach: resource overview
 - Keeping a teaching journal: individual activity
- Working with threshold concepts: resource overview
 - Crossing the line: individual activity
 - Crossing the line: group activity

