

PROGRAMME SPECIFICATION



1	Awarding Institution	Newcastle University
2	Teaching Institution	Newcastle University
3	Final Award	MA
4	Programme Title	Linguistics and Language Acquisition
5	Programme Code	4072
6	Programme Accreditation	N/A
7	QAA Subject Benchmark(s)	N/A
8	FHEQ Level	7
9	Last updated	07/03/11

10 Programme Aims

- 1 To produce postgraduate students holding a Master's degree who possess:
- (i) the research skills necessary to undertake independent study in linguistics and language acquisition;
 - (ii) the ability to undertake further postgraduate study
 - (iii) an advanced knowledge of a range of issues in language acquisition;
 - (iv) the ability to engage critically with current work in language acquisition.
- To provide a programme:
- (i) in which teaching is informed by research;
 - (ii) which attracts high level applicants from a range of backgrounds, including overseas applicants;
 - (iii) which enables students to conduct arguments effectively in a range of outputs, from high level essays, to oral presentations and data analysis
 - (iv) which enables students to work independently on an extended piece of research (the dissertation), under supervision ;
 - (v) which fully meets the requirements of the QAA's Framework for Higher Degree Qualifications at Masters level;
 - (vi) which conform to University policies and procedures.

11 Learning Outcomes

The programme provides opportunities for students to develop and demonstrate knowledge and understanding, qualities, skills and other attributes in the following areas. The programme outcomes have references to the benchmark statements.

Knowledge and Understanding

On completing the programme students should have:

- A1 Knowledge and understanding of recent and current debates in the field of language acquisition, within the context of the main theoretical and analytical frameworks used by language acquisition researchers.
- A2 Advanced and specialised knowledge of selected areas of study in linguistics and/or language acquisition.
- A3 Critical engagement with research literature and cutting edge research at the forefront of the discipline.

Teaching and Learning Methods

A1-3 will be acquired through lectures and seminars in the taught modules, as well as through the independent preparation students will engage in, both for the lectures and seminars and for the submission of assessed work. Students will be prepared for the dissertation both through the in-depth knowledge of specialised topics provided by the taught modules, and through the guidance and support provided by dissertation supervision sessions. Knowledge of core areas will be delivered in the compulsory modules, which will provide a foundation for the more specialised knowledge acquired in option modules.

Assessment Strategy

Extended essays and shorter exercises as appropriate - examinations, oral presentations and combinations thereof, as well as the dissertation. These encourage students to develop both detailed knowledge of specialised areas (**A3**), and an integrated view of problems and issues in the discipline (**A1, A2**). Given the interdisciplinary nature of the discipline, it is appropriate for students to undertake a wide a variety of assessment procedures, in order to acquire both the technical tools required by the discipline (e.g. syntactic analysis; data management and analysis), and the more generic critical and analytical skills typical of M level work. In modules assessed through a single piece of submitted work, students are given the opportunity to receive formative feedback on a detailed essay plan prior to submission.

Intellectual Skills

On completing the programme students should have:

- B1 Mastery of search and library skills, critical methodologies and theories, and tools for research in linguistics/language acquisition.
- B2 Ability to address linguistic questions and problems in terms of the theoretical debates currently at the forefront of academic work in language acquisition.
- B3 Mastery of the methods and skills required to collect and interpret data relevant to research in language acquisition.
- B4 Ability to place work on a specific topic in language acquisition in its wider theoretical context.

Teaching and Learning Methods

B1, 3 and **5** are taught specifically in SEL8500, *Research Methods in Language and Linguistics*, a two-semester compulsory module familiarises students with a range of research methods including those used for carrying out language acquisition research. **B2** and **4** are primarily taught in SML8006, *Introduction to Language Acquisition*, which aims to map the field in theoretical terms. The other two compulsory modules, SEL8116 (*English Sentence Structure*) and SEL8117 (*English Phonetics and Phonology*) address **B2** and **4**, i.e. the need to place language acquisition work within the wider theoretical context of academic study in linguistics. Additionally, all modules will also develop all these skills, by requiring students to carry out independent research which is evaluated according to how well students perform on these specific skills.

Assessment Strategy
All modules require independent research to be carried out by the students, which is assessed through a variety of means (essays, dissertation, oral presentations, practical exercises). In all these forms of assessment, the skills listed in B1-4) will all be tested to some degree, culminating in the assessment of the dissertation, in which all of them will be expected to be displayed with some degree of mastery. The progression from essays written for specific modules to the dissertation will provide an element of formative assessment, primarily through the feedback process.
Practical Skills
C1 Critical evaluation of arguments and theories; C2 Originality in complex problem solving; C3 Data collection and analysis; C4 Synthesis.
Teaching and Learning Methods
C1 is modelled in lectures and developed through seminar discussion, and through lecturer feedback on submitted work, both formative and summative. C2 and 3 are developed through seminar work and practical exercises in many of the modules, and is a particular focus of SEL8500. Specific problems set in essays and exercises, as well as the dissertation, also develop these skills. C4 is illustrated in lectures and seminars, and especially developed through submitted work and the dissertation.
Assessment Strategy
Essays and examinations, as well as the dissertation enable to assess C1, 2 and 4 (and in some cases, 3). C3 is assessed in SEL8500 through the 3 practical exercises required, and also in SML8006 through the practical exercise.
Transferable/Key Skills
On completing the programme students should be able to: D1 demonstrate self-direction and originality in planning and completing tasks, D2 deploy information technology (word processing; the internet) appropriately, D3 present research findings in a clear and accessible way, D4 work to deadlines.
Teaching and Learning Methods
D1- 3 are fostered and developed gradually through the progression from seminar and practical exercises to more extended submitted work, and finally the dissertation. D4 is developed specifically through SEL8500 (compulsory), as well as through a range of specialised option modules. General use of IT is also fostered through independent research and submission of work.
Assessment Strategy
D1-4 are assessed through all submitted work, and particularly the dissertation, which requires to have developed these skills to a high level. Oral communication is assessed through feedback from oral presentations, and also formatively through seminar contributions.

12 Programme Curriculum, Structure and Features

Basic structure of the programme

The programme may be taken on a full-time or part-time basis. It consists of 180 credits, which will normally be structured as follows:

Full-time:

Semester 1: 70 credits (SEL8116; SEL8117; SEL8500a; SML8006; 20 credits from option modules)

Semester 2: 50 credits (SEL8500b; 40 credits from option modules)

Summer: 60 credits (SML8097 dissertation)

Part-time:

Semester 1, yr 1: 50 credits (SEL8116; SEL8117 SEL8500a; SML8006)

Semester 2, yr 1: 30 credits (SEL8500b; 20 credits from option modules)

Semester 1, yr 2: 40 credits (option modules)

Semester 2, yr 2: 60 credits (SML8097 dissertation)

Students may substitute one stage 2/3 undergraduate module noted in the regulations for a postgraduate module (20 credits) and (apart from the three SML modules which are connected to the cross-School MA in Linguistics and Language Acquisition) students may take modules to the value of 20 credits per year from Schools in which modules relevant to their Degree Programme are taught (in particular, ECLS and SML).

Co- and pre-requisite modules

For those modules that involve a progression over two semesters, students on this Degree Programme need to make sure that when registering for a Semester 2 module, they meet the pre-requisites by taking the relevant Semester 1 module.

Key features of the programme (including what makes the programme distinctive)

The programme is designed to provide students with a solid foundation in language acquisition studies which will enable them to carry out further research should they so wish. In order to achieve this, students are given a solid foundation in formal linguistics (SEL8116 and SEL8117), as well as an introduction to language acquisition research (SML8006) and its research methodology (SEL8500). Students are then equipped to either (a) follow more specialised language acquisition modules (e.g. in first language acquisition, in second language syntax, or in second language phonology), or (b) take a wide range of linguistics modules which will give them the tools to investigate various aspects of language acquisition (e.g. sociolinguistics, semantics, pragmatics, discourse etc.).

Programme regulations (link to on-line version)

<http://www.ncl.ac.uk/regulations/programme/>

13 Criteria for admission

Entry qualifications

Admissions policy/selection tools

Applicants should normally hold a good first degree (2.1 or above – or equivalent) in a foreign language or in Linguistics, or an appropriate related discipline (e.g. psychology, English, cognitive science etc.). Overseas students whose first language is not English must reach a minimum IELTS score of 7.0 or equivalent, and may be required to attend a pre-sessional or in-sessional course at the University Language Centre.

Non-standard Entry Requirements

Applicant without the standard qualifications will be invited to submit work and to come for interview.

Additional Requirements

None

Level of English Language capability

See above

14 Support for Student Learning

The Student Services portal provides links to key services and other information and is available at: <http://www.ncl.ac.uk/students/>

Induction

During the first week of the first semester students attend an induction programme. New students will be given a general introduction to University life and the University's principal support services and general information about the School and their programme, as described in the Degree Programme Handbook. New and continuing students will be given detailed programme information and the timetable of lectures/practicals/labs/ tutorials/etc. The International Office offers an additional induction programme for overseas students.

Study skills support

Students will learn a range of Personal Transferable Skills, including Study Skills, as outlined in the Programme Specification. Some of this material, e.g. time management is covered in the appropriate Induction Programme. Students are explicitly tutored on their approach to both group and individual projects.

Numeracy support is available through Maths Aid and help with academic writing is available from the Writing Centre (further information is available from the Robinson Library).

Academic support

The initial point of contact for a student is with a lecturer or module leader, or their tutor (see below) for more generic issues. Thereafter the Degree Programme Director or Head of School may be consulted. Issues relating to the programme may be raised at the Staff-Student Committee, and/or at the Board of Studies.

Pastoral support

All students are assigned a personal tutor whose responsibility is to monitor the academic performance and overall well-being of their tutees. In addition the University offers a range of support services, including one-to-one counselling and guidance or group sessions / workshops on a range of topics, such as emotional issues e.g. Stress and anxiety, student finance and budgeting, disability matters etc. There is specialist support available for students with dyslexia and mental health issues. Furthermore, the Union Society operates a Student Advice Centre, which can provide advocacy and support to students on a range of topics including housing, debt, legal issues etc.

Support for students with disabilities

The University's Disability Support Service provides help and advice for disabled students at the University - and those thinking of coming to Newcastle. It provides individuals with: advice about the University's facilities, services and the accessibility of campus; details about the technical support available; guidance in study skills and advice on financial support arrangements; a resources room with equipment and software to assist students in their studies.

Learning resources

The University's main learning resources are provided by the Robinson and Walton Libraries (for books, journals, online resources), and Information Systems and Services, which supports campus-wide computing facilities.

All new students whose first language is not English are required to take an English Language Proficiency Test. This is administered by INTO Newcastle University Centre on behalf of Newcastle University. Where appropriate, in-session language training can be provided. The INTO Newcastle University Centre houses a range of resources which may be particularly appropriate for those interested in an Erasmus exchange.

15 Methods for evaluating and improving the quality and standards of teaching and learning

Module reviews

All modules are subject to review by questionnaires which are considered by the Board of Studies. Changes to, or the introduction of new, modules are considered at the Board of Studies and/or the School Teaching and Learning Committee. Student opinion is sought at the Staff-Student Committee and/or the Board of Studies. New modules and major changes to existing modules are subject to approval by the Faculty Teaching and Learning Committee.

Programme reviews

The Board of Studies conducts an Annual Monitoring and Review of the degree programme and reports to Faculty Teaching and Learning Committee. The FTLC takes an overview of all programmes within the Faculty and reports any Faculty or institutional issues to the University Teaching and Learning Committee.

External Examiner reports

External Examiner reports are considered by the Board of Studies. The Board responds to these reports through Faculty Teaching and Learning Committee. External Examiner reports are shared with institutional student representatives, through the Staff-Student Committee.

Student evaluations

All modules, and the degree programme, are subject to review by student questionnaires. Informal student evaluation is also obtained at the Staff-Student Committee, and the Board of Studies. The results from student surveys are considered as part of the Annual Monitoring and Review of the programme and any arising actions are captured at programme and School / institutional level and reported to the appropriate body.

Mechanisms for gaining student feedback

Feedback is channelled via the Staff-Student Committee and the Board of Studies.

Faculty and University Review Mechanisms

The programme is subject to the University's Internal Subject Review process. Every five years degree programmes in each subject area are subject to periodic review. This involves both the detailed consideration of a range of documentation, and a two-day review visit by a review team which includes an external subject specialist in addition to University and Faculty representatives. Following the review a report is produced, which forms the basis for a decision by University Teaching and Learning Committee on whether the programmes reviewed should be re-approved for a further five year period.

Accreditation reports

Additional mechanisms

16 Regulation of assessment

Pass mark

The pass mark is 50%

Course requirements

Progression is subject to the University's Masters Degree Progress Regulations, Taught and Research and Examination Conventions for Taught Masters Degrees. Limited compensation up to 40 credits of the taught element and down to a mark of 40% is possible and there are reassessment opportunities, with certain restrictions.

The University employs a common marking scheme, which is specified in the Taught Postgraduate Examination Conventions, namely:

Summary description applicable to postgraduate Masters programmes

Summary description applicable to postgraduate Certificate and Diploma programmes

<50	Fail	<50	Fail
50-59	Pass	50 or above	Pass
60-69	Pass with Merit		
70 or above	Pass with Distinction		

Role of the External Examiner

An External Examiner, a distinguished member of the subject community, is appointed by Faculty Teaching and Learning Committee, following recommendation from the Board of Studies. The External Examiner is expected to:

- i. See and approve assessment papers
- ii. Moderate examination and coursework marking
- iii. Attend the Board of Examiners
- iv. Report to the University on the standards of the programme

In addition, information relating to the programme is provided in:

The University Prospectus: <http://www.ncl.ac.uk/postgraduate/>

The School Brochure

Degree Programme and University Regulations: <http://www.ncl.ac.uk/regulations/docs/>

The Degree Programme Handbook

Please note. This specification provides a concise summary of the main features of the programme and of the learning outcomes that a typical student might reasonably be expected to achieve if she/he takes full advantage of the learning opportunities provided. The accuracy of the information contained is reviewed by the University and may be checked by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education.

Mapping of Intended Learning Outcomes onto Curriculum/Modules

Either

Intended Learning Outcome	Module codes (Compulsory in Bold)
A1	ABC1001 , XYZ2002
A2	
A3	
A4	
B1	
B2	
B3	
B4	
C1	
C2	
C3	
C4	
D1	
D2	
D3	
D4	

Or

Module	Type	Intended Learning Outcomes			
		A	B	C	D
XYZ1001	Compulsory	1	1, 2, 3	4	2, 3