

# Programme Specification

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## Academic Year 2017-18 MA in Language Acquisition Research

**Programme Code:** 5404 (Full Time); 5875 (Part Time)

**This specification provides a concise summary of the main features of the programme and the learning outcomes that a typical student might reasonably be expected to achieve and demonstrate if s/he takes full advantage of the learning opportunities that are provided.**

Awarding Institution	University of Southampton
Teaching Institution	University of Southampton
Mode of study	Full time or Part time is permitted
Duration in years	1 year (full time) or 2 years (part time)
Accreditation details	Not applicable
Final award	Master of Arts
Name of award	Language Acquisition Research
Interim Exit awards	PG Cert
FHEQ level of final award	HE7
UCAS code	N/A
QAA Subject Benchmark or other external reference	QAA Masters Degree Characteristics (2010)
Programme Lead	Dr Glyn Hicks
Date specification was written	25/01/2013
Date specification was last updated	June 2017

## Programme Overview

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### Brief outline of the programme

The Masters in Language Acquisition Research allows you to develop understanding of advanced level topics in linguistics and extend your research skills, managing a substantial research project culminating in a 20,000-word dissertation in the field of language acquisition. This exercise in independent study will in many cases act as preparation for a doctoral degree, developing your ability to work independently as a researcher. The programme will include three taught modules in linguistics, training in quantitative and qualitative research methods, as well as research skills specific to linguistics.

### Learning and teaching

Your knowledge and understanding will be developed through a variety of teaching and learning activities, designed to meet the specific needs of students on a postgraduate degree geared towards research. In the core double module *New Directions in Language Acquisition*, the first half of semester 1 will be delivered in tutorial mode, with weekly contact hours with the module tutor to guide you through a tailored programme of readings. As the semester progresses and you prepare for your assignment in semester 1 and short research project in semester 2, the contact time with the module tutor will become less frequent and move towards individual discussions and research supervision, encouraging you to progress to supervisory/research mode. In preparing your dissertation you will be entitled to meet your dissertation supervisor regularly, and be required to prepare reviews of relevant literature, for discussion.

Part of the research skills component of the Masters in Language Acquisition Research is taught conjointly with the MA Applied Linguistics for Language Teaching. In addition, three research skills modules are provided by the University's ESRC Doctoral Training Centre. Research skills training will involve structured tutor-led seminars, and individual tutorials. Learning activities will include designing and trialling qualitative and quantitative research instruments, practising using electronic linguistic databases and analysis software, leading workshops, giving

presentations to other linguistics students who may not as be familiar with your methodologies, and offering feedback on theirs. You will have access to teaching materials and learning resources via the virtual learning environment (Blackboard Academic Suite). Other intellectual and research skills will be developed with your module tutor and dissertation supervisor in the context of the discussions of your reading/literature review, dissertation planning, and dissertation drafts.

Your key skills will be developed through the various activities you will undertake as part of the Masters programme. These include, but are not restricted to, preparation for tutorials, tutorial discussions, tutor-led and student-led seminars, oral presentations, research skills training sessions, research project design, supervision sessions, independent research, and the writing of the dissertation. The generic research skills components in particular will develop key skills such as problem-solving, presentation of informed argument in oral and written forms, and advanced communication skills.

## Assessment

Your knowledge and understanding will be assessed through a number of different assessment styles, matched to your level of expertise at each point in the programme, and integrated into the development of your research topic. This will involve written work, research proposal/design work, and literature reviews. Oral assignments will include a formal presentation of the research proposal for your dissertation topic. At each stage of assessment, feedback will be provided to identify your progress and additional areas to consider, develop and concentrate upon. You will be provided with informal feedback both verbally and in writing for formative purposes, and for all formal assessments you will receive written feedback. The final component of the assignment is a dissertation of up to 20,000 words, which tests the breadth, depth, and complexity of your knowledge and understanding. There are no examinations in this programme. Choice of dissertation topic is subject to the availability of supervisory expertise within Modern Languages.

During the programme, student-led seminars and tutorials, oral presentations, the production of an annotated bibliography, and small-scale research projects will be used to assess your intellectual skills. Since the full range of skills is assessed in the dissertation, these activities are also designed to enhance your formative intellectual development. These assessments provide the opportunity to practice newly acquired intellectual and research skills and to identify areas of weakness for further improvement before the final summative assessment, the dissertation.

You will demonstrate your key skills through assessed oral presentations and written tasks related to research design in the research skills component of the course. Critical and evaluative skills, written communication skills and independent working and time-management skills are assessed indirectly in the form of the essay and small-scale research project you will undertake in the double module *New Directions in Language Acquisition*, and your sustained application and integration of these skills will be evaluated in the 20,000-word dissertation.

**Please note:** As a research-led University, we undertake a continuous review of our programmes to ensure quality enhancement and to manage our resources. As a result, this programme may be revised during a student's period of registration, however, any revision will be balanced against the requirement that the student should receive the educational service expected. Please read our [Disclaimer](#) to see why, when and how changes may be made to a student's programme.

Programmes and major changes to programmes are approved through the University's programme validation process which is described in the University's Quality handbook.

## Educational Aims of the Programme

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Through the programme, we aim to:

- Provide appropriate research and training in linguistics tailored to your needs, depending on your level of experience in your chosen field
- Provide you with a thorough knowledge of current theoretical frameworks, and in particular their consequences for understanding the nature of the human language faculty, its subsystems, and the relationships (interfaces) between them
- Develop your proficiency in analysing complex linguistic phenomena
- Enable you to critically evaluate advanced theoretical concepts and terminology in linguistics
- Enable you to apply the results of your learning, reflection, and research in language acquisition and linguistics to new data, including the development of your own research project

- Provide you with the opportunity to identify an area of theoretical interest within which you are able to carry out a research project, culminating in a substantial piece of original research which may have the potential to make a new contribution to the field
- Assist you in the transition from directed learning to research mode, developing your ability to work independently as a researcher
- Equip you with advanced skills in applying linguistic theories that are essential for Masters level research, and with the necessary training to disseminate your research in presentations both within and beyond the institution

Staff in Modern Languages at the University of Southampton have considerable research expertise in the programme content. They also have experience of running highly regarded taught Masters programmes, including programmes in Applied Linguistics and Research Methods for Applied Linguistics (with which part of the research skills training for the MA is integrated). The University has overall responsibility for the programme and for ensuring the quality of your learning experience. It has planned the overall design of the programme, established assessment procedures and administrative systems.

## **Programme Learning Outcomes**

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### **Knowledge and Understanding**

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Having successfully completed this programme you will be able to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of:

- A1 Key empirical phenomena in language acquisition, including the nature of speakers' grammatical representations of their first or second language and the effects of the critical period on language acquisition
- A2 The mechanisms and processes underlying these representations, including functional feature assembly, transfer, fossilisation, attrition and representational deficits (syntactic, semantic or pragmatic)
- A3 Contemporary debates in linguistics and language acquisition, including the implications of different approaches to the architecture of the human language faculty for language acquisition
- A4 How the conceptual frameworks in which linguistic research is carried out have changed and developed, and the measures by which modern linguistic theories are evaluated
- A5 The subjects chosen for your research project and dissertation, including principal subject-specific literature
- A6 Research methodologies and ancillary skills appropriate to your chosen subject

### **Subject Specific Intellectual and Research Skills**

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Having successfully completed this programme you will be able to:

- B1 Synthesise contrasting theoretical viewpoints and frameworks to critique key issues relating to language acquisition theory and inform an appreciation of the relevant debates in the field
- B2 Conceptualise, theorise, and rationalise solutions to linguistic problems through the application of your knowledge and understanding of the field
- B3 Understand where and when to integrate quantitative procedures into mixed mode research designs
- B4 Devise and carry out a research plan, demonstrating how your evaluation of relevant theories of linguistic phenomena influences the design of your own study
- B5 Effectively present and reflectively critique your own research

### **Transferable and Generic Skills**

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Having successfully completed this programme you will be able to:

- C1 Synthesise and analyse large amounts of complex written material

- C2 Demonstrate proficiency in general research skills, selecting and drawing upon printed and electronic resources to gather documentation and enhance your understanding of a given topic
- C3 Communicate complex ideas and arguments in a concise, logically structured, and coherent manner, in oral and written form, and making appropriate use of information technology to present your research
- C4 Apply interpersonal skills when investigating problems with tutors and other students, and when presenting arguments and evidence
- C5 Constructively criticise and evaluate the work of others, particularly (but not exclusively) in relation to your own developing ideas and view of the subject
- C6 Take appropriate ethical concerns into consideration in undertaking any kind of research
- C7 Work with greater autonomy, demonstrating self-confidence and self-awareness

## Programme Structure

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### Programme details

The modules in this programme involve postgraduate level study in language acquisition and linguistics, and advance a range of skills in managing an extended research project in this subject. You will follow the core double module *New Directions in Language Acquisition*, which spans the two teaching semesters and is worth 15 ECTS (30 CATS). As you progress from a taught mode towards a research-based mode, the contact time on this module reduces throughout the programme, with the final module assignment submitted before Easter. In each semester you will choose one relevant option module (each worth 7.5 ECTS (15 CATS) from the range of modules from in Applied Linguistics MA programme. These are subject to availability in each year, but a representative sample includes *Spoken Language and Discourse*, *Assessment of Language Proficiency*, *Language in Society*, *Writing and Written Language*. Your option module choice will be agreed with the programme convenor to ensure that you receive a balanced, coherent curriculum.

The programme also comprises four taught research skills components: three are hosted by the ESRC Doctoral Training Centre and are each worth 5 ECTS (10 CATS). There is also a research skills module specifically for students preparing dissertations in linguistics, which is worth 7.5 ECTS (15 CATS). The dissertation module is 37.5 ECTS (75 CATS), giving a total of 90 ECTS (180 CATS) credits for the programme. Please refer to the course map below:

### Availability of Modules

**The information contained in programme specification is correct at the time it was published. Typically, around a quarter of optional modules do not run due to low interest or unanticipated changes in staff availability. If we do have insufficient numbers of students interested in an optional module, this may not be offered. If an optional module will not be run, we will advise you as soon as possible and help you choose an alternative module.**

Compulsory Modules		
LING6017	Research skills (Dissertation)	7.5 ECTS (15 CATS)
RESM6304	Quantitative Methods 1	5 ECTS (10 CATS)
RESM6102	Research Design & Practice	5 ECTS (10 CATS)
RESM6303	Qualitative Methods 1	5 ECTS (10 CATS)
Subject Specific Option modules		
LING6006	Language and Society	7.5 ECTS (15 CATS)
LING6005	Second Language Learning	7.5 ECTS (15 CATS)
LING6007	Assessment of Language Proficiency	7.5 ECTS (15 CATS)
LING6008	Autonomy and Individualisation in Language Learning	7.5 ECTS (15 CATS)
LING6009	Discourse Analysis	7.5 ECTS (15 CATS)
LING6010	Language Teacher Education	7.5 ECTS (15 CATS)
LING6011	Writing and Written Language	7.5 ECTS (15 CATS)
LING6013	Current Issues in Language Teaching Methodology	7.5 ECTS (15 CATS)
LING6014	English as a World Language	7.5 ECTS (15 CATS)
LING6022	Principles of Communicative Language Teaching	7.5 ECTS (15 CATS)
LING6028	Intercultural Communications	7.5 ECTS (15 CATS)
LING6044	Teaching Foreign Languages to Younger Learners	7.5 ECTS (15 CATS)

The full-time programme has two 12-week semesters running from October to January and February to June. It has been designed to be tailored as far as possible to meet individual needs, accommodating mature students and students with learning difficulties. The programme is normally studied over one year full time, but may also be taken on a part-time basis over two years.

Depending on your subject experience, you will have the opportunity to audit a small number of final year undergraduate modules in other sub-disciplines of linguistics. You may wish to use this opportunity to improve your general grounding in linguistics, which might be useful if you are intending to pursue an academic career in linguistics. You will not submit assignments or receive credit for any modules you audit.

The programme follows the University Regulations on Progression, Determination and Classification of Results specified in Section IV of the University Calendar (<http://www.calendar.soton.ac.uk/sectionIV/progression-regs.html>). If the programme is not completed, or if not all modules are passed, no alternative qualification (e.g. Postgraduate Certificate or Diploma) will be awarded.

## Additional Costs

Students are responsible for meeting the cost of essential textbooks, and of producing such essays, assignments, reports and dissertations as are required to fulfil the academic requirements for each programme of study. Costs that students registered for this programme typically also have to pay for are included in Appendix 2.

## Progression Requirements

The programme follows the University's regulations for [\*Progression, Determination and Classification of Results : Standalone Masters Programmes\*](http://www.calendar.soton.ac.uk/sectionIV/progression-regs.html) as set out in the University Calendar: <http://www.calendar.soton.ac.uk/sectionIV/progression-regs.html>

## Intermediate exit points

You will be eligible for an interim exit award if you complete part of the programme but not all of it, as follows:

Qualification	Minimum overall credit in ECTS credits	Minimum ECTS credits required at level of award
Postgraduate Certificate	at least 30	20

## Support for student learning

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There are facilities and services to support your learning some of which are accessible to students across the University and some of which will be geared more particularly to students in your particular Faculty or discipline area.

The University provides:

- library resources, including e-books, on-line journals and databases, which are comprehensive and up-to-date; together with assistance from Library staff to enable you to make the best use of these resources
- high speed access to online electronic learning resources on the Internet from dedicated PC Workstations onsite and from your own devices; laptops, smartphones and tablet PCs via the Eduroam wireless network. There is a wide range of application software available from the Student Public Workstations.
- computer accounts which will connect you to a number of learning technologies for example, the Blackboard virtual learning environment (which facilitates online learning and access to specific learning resources)
- standard ICT tools such as Email, secure filestore and calendars.

- access to key information through the MySouthampton Student Mobile Portal which delivers timetables, Module information, Locations, Tutor details, Library account, bus timetables etc. while you are on the move.
- IT support through a comprehensive website, telephone and online ticketed support and a dedicated helpdesk in the Student Services Centre
- Enabling Services offering assessment and support facilities (including specialist IT support) if you have a disability, dyslexia, mental health issue or specific learning difficulties
- the Student Services Centre (SSC) to assist you with a range of general enquiries including financial matters, accommodation, exams, graduation, student visas and ID cards
- Career Destinations, advising on job search, applications, interviews, paid work, volunteering and internship opportunities and getting the most out of your extra-curricular activities alongside your degree programme when writing your CV
- a range of personal support services : mentoring, counselling, residence support service, chaplaincy, health service
- a Centre for Language Study, providing assistance in the development of English language and study skills for non-native speakers.

The Students' Union provides:

- an academic student representation system, consisting of Course Representatives, Academic Presidents, Faculty Officers and the Vice-President Education; Students' Unions provides training and support for all these representatives, whose role is to represent students' views to the University.
- opportunities for extracurricular activities and volunteering
- an Advice Centre offering free and confidential advice including support if you need to make an academic appeal
- Support for student peer-to-peer groups, such as Nightline.

## Methods for evaluating the quality of teaching and learning

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You will have the opportunity to have your say on the quality of the programme in the following ways:

- Completing student evaluation questionnaires for each module of the programme
- Acting as a student representative on various committees, e.g. Staff: Student Liaison Committees, Faculty Programmes Committee OR providing comments to your student representative to feed back on your behalf.
- Serving as a student representative on Faculty Scrutiny Groups for programme validation
- Taking part in programme validation meetings by joining a panel of students to meet with the Faculty Scrutiny Group

The ways in which the quality of your programme is checked, both inside and outside the University, are:

- Regular module and programme reports which are monitored by the Faculty
- Programme validation, normally every five years.
- External examiners, who produce an annual report
- A national Research Assessment Exercise (our research activity contributes directly to the quality of your learning experience)
- Higher Education Review by the Quality Assurance Agency

## Criteria for admission

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### University Commitment

The University will at all times seek to operate admissions regulations that are fair and are in accordance with the law of the United Kingdom, and the University's Charter, Statutes, Ordinances and Regulations.

This includes specific compliance with legislation relating to discrimination (e.g. Equality Act 2010) and the University's Equal Opportunities Policy Statement. This includes a commitment that the University will:

- actively assist groups that experience disadvantage in education and employment to benefit from belonging to the University

- actively seek to widen participation to enable students that do not traditionally participate in Higher Education to do so;
- ensure that admission procedures select students fairly and appropriately according to their academic ability and that the procedure is monitored and regularly reviewed.

## Entry Requirements

The University's Admissions Policy applies equally to all programmes of study. The following are the typical entry criteria to be used for selecting candidates for admission. The University's approved equivalencies for the requirements listed below will also be acceptable.

Qualification	Grade/GPA	Subjects requirements	Specific requirements
Honours degree or equivalent	First- or upper second-class	English, Linguistics, Modern Languages or another relevant discipline.	The programme requires advanced study in either Syntax and Semantics or Language Acquisition, you will be required to demonstrate appropriate expertise in the relevant areas.

## Mature applicants

Studying for a degree later in life can be extremely rewarding and mature students are often among our most successful.

If you are over 21 and feel you would benefit from degree-level studies, we can be more flexible about our entry requirements. For full-time courses, selectors will expect you to demonstrate your commitment by means of some recent serious study, for example, one or two A level passes, successful completion of an Open University foundation course or an appropriate Access course. Your application will be considered on individual merit and you may be asked to attend an interview.

More information on the entry requirements for MA Language Acquisition Research can be found on the Modern Languages webpage here:

[http://www.southampton.ac.uk/humanities/postgraduate/taught\\_courses/taught\\_courses/modern\\_languages/q100\\_ma\\_language\\_acquisition\\_research.page](http://www.southampton.ac.uk/humanities/postgraduate/taught_courses/taught_courses/modern_languages/q100_ma_language_acquisition_research.page)

For further information, please contact our Admissions Team: [pgafh@southampton.ac.uk](mailto:pgafh@southampton.ac.uk)

The University's Admission policy is available at

<http://www.southampton.ac.uk/studentadmin/admissions/admissionspolicies/policy/>

## Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)

The University has a [Recognition of Prior Learning Policy](#)

Students are accepted under the University's recognition of prior learning policy; however, each case will be reviewed on an individual basis.

## English Language Proficiency

Overall	Reading	Writing	Speaking	Listening
6.5	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0

## External Examiners(s) for the programme

**Name** Dr Duncan Hunter **Institution** University of Hull

Students must not contact External Examiner(s) directly, and external examiners have been advised to refer any such communications back to the University. Students should raise any general queries about the assessment and examination process for the programme with their Course Representative, for consideration through Staff: Student Liaison Committee in the first instance, and Student representatives on Staff: Student Liaison Committees will have the opportunity to consider external examiners' reports as part of the University's quality assurance process.

External examiners do not have a direct role in determining results for individual students, and students wishing to discuss their own performance in assessment should contact their personal tutor in the first instance.

**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 be expected to achieve and demonstrate if s/he takes full advantage of the learning opportunities that are provided. More detailed information can be found in the

programme handbook (or other appropriate guide) or online at

[http://www.southampton.ac.uk/humanities/postgraduate/taught\\_courses/taught\\_courses/modern\\_languages/q100\\_ma\\_language\\_aquisition\\_research.page?](http://www.southampton.ac.uk/humanities/postgraduate/taught_courses/taught_courses/modern_languages/q100_ma_language_aquisition_research.page?) .



## Appendix:

### Learning outcomes and Assessment Mapping document template

		Knowledge and Understanding						Subject Specific Intellectual Skills				
Module Code	Module Title	A1	A2	A3	A4	A5	A6	B1	B2	B3	B4	B5
LING6017	Research Skills (Dissertation) (compulsory)					•	•			•	•	•
RESM6304	Quantitative Methods 1 (compulsory)						•			•		
RESM6102	Research Design & Practice (compulsory)						•			•		
RESM6003	Qualitative Methods 1 (compulsory)						•					
		Transferable/Key Skills										
Module Code	Module Title	C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	C6	C7				
LING6017	Research Skills (Dissertation) (compulsory)	•	•	•	•	•	•					
RESM6304	Quantitative Methods 1 (compulsory)		•				•					
RESM6102	Research Design & Practice (compulsory)		•				•					
RESM6003	Qualitative Methods 1 (compulsory)		•				•					

<b>Module Code</b>	<b>Module Title</b>	<b>Coursework 1</b>	<b>Coursework 2</b>	<b>Exam</b>
LING6017	Research Skills (Dissertation) (compulsory)	Annotated bibliography (2000 words) <b>50%</b>	Dissertation proposal (1500 words) = 40% Reflective blog = 10% <b>Total = 50%</b>	n/a
RESM6304	Quantitative Methods 1 (compulsory)	2500 – 3000 word assignment <b>100%</b>	n/a	n/a
RESM6102	Research Design & Practice (compulsory)	2500 – 3000 word assignment <b>100%</b>	n/a	n/a
RESM6003	Qualitative Methods 1 (compulsory)	250-500 word reflective report <b>5%</b>	3000 word assignment <b>95%</b>	n/a

## Appendix 2:

### Additional Costs

Students are responsible for meeting the cost of essential textbooks, and of producing such essays, assignments, laboratory reports and dissertations as are required to fulfil the academic requirements for each programme of study. In addition to this, students registered for this programme typically also have to pay for: [insert relevant bullet points from the following list]:

- Books and Stationery Equipment (such as Lab equipment, Field Equipment, Art equipment, Recording Equipment, stethoscopes, fob watch, Excavation equipment, Approved Calculators)
- Materials (such as laboratory materials, textbooks, drawing paper, fabric, thread, computer disks, Sheet Music)
- Software Licenses
- Clothing (such as Protective Clothing, Lab Coats, specific shoes and trousers)
- Printing and Photocopying Costs (such as Printing coursework for submission, Printing and binding dissertations or theses, Academic Poster (A1) printing).
- Typing Costs
- Field Trips (including accommodation costs for the field trips)
- Work Experience and Placements (including accommodation costs near the placement, additional insurance costs)
- Travel Costs for placements, field trips and to and from the University and various campus locations (including travel insurance).
- Paying for immunisation and vaccination costs before being allowed to attend placements.
- Obtaining Disclosure and Barring Certificates or Clearance Subsistence Costs
- Paying for a Music accompanist
- Translation of birth certificates (for programmes abroad)
- Conference expenses
- Professional exams
- Parking costs (including on placements at hospitals)
- Replacing lost student ID cards
- Other activities (e.g. visiting specialist marine stations and other institutions)
- Costs of attending a graduation ceremony (e.g. hiring a gown for graduation).

In some cases you'll be able to choose modules (which may have different costs associated with that module) which will change the overall cost of a programme to you. Details of such costs will be listed in the Module Profile. Please also ensure you read the section on additional costs in the University's Fees, Charges and Expenses Regulations in the University Calendar available at [www.calendar.soton.ac.uk](http://www.calendar.soton.ac.uk).