

## **MA/Postgraduate Diploma/Postgraduate Certificate in Applied Linguistics (MAAL)**

**For students entering in 2008**

Awarding Institution:	The University of Reading
Teaching Institution:	The University of Reading Faculty of Arts & Humanities
Programme length:	12 months (full-time)
Date of specification:	
Programme Director:	Dr Alan Tonkyn
Board of Studies:	MA in Applied Linguistics

### **Summary of programme aims**

The MAAL is designed as a programme of continuing development for language professionals, especially those working in the field of language teaching. Core modules are offered in language description, language pedagogy and language learning, and students are given an up-to-date knowledge of principles and issues of importance within the broad field of study of language in use. Through a choice of options, students also have access to a further range of pedagogy and non-pedagogy-related areas of interest. They receive a thorough grounding that will help them to develop their career in a wide range of language related professions.

### **Transferable skills**

In addition to those skills which all students are expected to have developed by the end of their degree programme, it is envisaged that MAAL students will have developed or enhanced the following more specific transferable skills:

- analysing and categorising – and hence evaluating – language at different levels;
- designing curricula and syllabi on the basis of data provided;
- synthesising, analysing and evaluating information and theoretical claims in specialist literature;
- giving well-organised, clear oral presentations to a specialist or semi-specialist audience;
- producing well-structured and clearly-written academic and professional papers;
- collaborating with others in research, problem-solving and/or the development of plans and recommendations;
- designing and conducting a research project, including a clear statement of research aims, identifying and searching relevant bibliographical sources, conducting an empirical or library-based investigation, and analysing and interpreting results in relation to established theory and professional concerns;
- using time efficiently while carrying out reading, research and related writing activities.

### **Programme content**

The MAAL programme allows students some freedom to suit their own needs, but with a shared foundation of compulsory core modules. The latter combine with option modules which may be selected from a range of available subjects within the School.

The **compulsory modules** are divided into four areas: language description (with specific reference to English), sociolinguistics, language teaching and learning and research. The language description, language teaching and learning, and sociolinguistics modules run in the Autumn term. The research area comprises a non-assessed module in research design and basic statistical methods (taught in the Spring Term) and the dissertation, of 15,000 words, on

a topic in the field Applied Linguistics, broadly defined. Research for, and the writing of, the dissertation take place in the Summer term and the Summer vacation.

The **option modules** cover a wide range of linguistic and applied areas offered within the School and, together with the dissertation, provide flexibility and the opportunity for specialisation.

The following list specifies the obligatory (total 120 credits) and option modules (total 60 credits). In consultation with their programme adviser, students must choose 3 option modules (each of 20 credits).

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

*Compulsory modules*

**Autumn term**

LSMPH1	<i>Foundation Phonetics &amp; Phonology</i>	10	M
LSMGL	<i>English Grammar and Lexis</i>	10	M
LSMDT	<i>Discourse Analysis for Language Teachers</i>	10	M
LSMSL	<i>Second Language Learning Principles</i>	20	M
LSMSO	<i>Sociolinguistics</i>	10	M

**Spring and Summer term and Summer vacation**

LSMDIA	<i>Research Design &amp; Dissertation (MAAL)</i>	60	M
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*Option modules*

Students select three 20-credit options from the following (or two 20-credit modules and a pair of 10 credit Linguistics modules). An asterisk (\*) indicates that the module will only be available to students with relevant teaching experience.

**Autumn Term**

LSMCL	<i>Child Language Development</i>	20	M
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**Spring term**

*	LSMLCL	<i>Language Curriculum Design</i>	20	M
	LSMTP	<i>Language Testing Principles</i>	20	M
*	LSMWL	<i>Written Language (Reading &amp; Writing)</i>	20	M
	LSNCA	<i>Corpora in Applied Linguistics</i>	20	M
	LSMES	<i>English for Specific Purposes</i>	20	M
	LSMEW	<i>English in the World</i>	20	M
	LSMPL	<i>Psycholinguistics</i>	20	M
	LSMEPH	<i>Experimental Phonology for Language Teachers</i>	20	M
	LSMFL	<i>First Language Acquisition</i>	20	M
	LSMRT	<i>Research Topics in English Grammar</i>	20	M

**Summer Term**

*	LSMSP	<i>Spoken Language (Listening &amp; Speaking)</i>	20	M
	LSMYL	<i>Teaching Young Learners</i>	20	M
*	LSMIT	<i>Information Technology for Language Teaching</i>	20	M
	LSMIC	<i>Intercultural Communication</i>	20	M

The assessment of those modules running entirely in the Autumn term will be by assignments and an examination to be completed either before or over the Christmas vacation; assessment of those modules running entirely, or completed, in the Spring term, will be by assignments to be

completed over the Easter vacation. Modules running entirely, or completed, in the Summer term will be assessed by assignments to be submitted by the beginning of the fourth week of the summer vacation. The dissertation will be submitted by 22<sup>nd</sup> September.

### **Part-time/Modular arrangements**

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 to 4 years, but with a maximum of 6 years.

The structure of these arrangements is as follows:

Part-time (24 months):

Year 1: 3 compulsory taught modules and 1-2 option modules;

Year 2: 3 compulsory taught modules (including Research Design) and 1-2 option modules + dissertation.

Modular (3-4 years)

Years 1-3: 2 core modules p.a., including Research Design in year 3, and 1 option module p.a.;

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**

N/A

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

Modules are taught by lectures, seminars and small group practical work. The dissertation module additionally is supported by individual supervision. Most modules are assessed wholly by coursework, but there may also be assessment by examination: details are given in the module descriptions.

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

Mark Interpretation

70 – 100% Distinction

60 – 69% Merit

50 – 59% Good standard (Pass)

Failing categories

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 LSMPH1, LSMGL, LSMDT, LSMSL and LSMSO. 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 50 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 LSMPH1, LSMGL, LSMDT, LSMSL and LSMSO. 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 LSMPH1, LSMGL, LSMDT, LSMSL and LSMSO. In addition the total credit value of all modules marked below 40 must not exceed 10 credits.

#### **Admission requirements**

Entrants to this programme are normally required to have a good first degree, preferably in a language- or language/education-related subject, and at least two years' full-time language teaching experience, or equivalent professional (language- related) experience.

Non-graduates may exceptionally be admitted to the programme if they have  
-a diploma level teaching qualification, or its equivalent in in-service teaching qualifications  
-several years of teaching or other language-related professional experience, with evidence of a high level of professional activity in areas such as conference attendance and presentations, the production of teaching materials and the writing of professional / academic papers.

All entrants to the programme will be required to meet the following 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 6.5 on the IELTS test, with no sub-test band below 6, or TOEFL paper-based test: 580; computer-based test: 240; TWE: 4.5 but with the following conditions attached

- a) Any applicant who achieves the minimum IELTS scores (or TOEFL equivalents) specified above will be strongly recommended to take at least 5 weeks of pre-sessional English instruction (although that will not be made a condition of acceptance).
- b) Any applicant whose English score is at the levels shown in above on entry to the programme will be required to take a special dedicated in- sessional English course during the MA programme. Compliance with this would be a condition of remaining on the programme. This course will, as minimum, consist of six two-hour class sessions in the first term, with follow-up individual tutorials as needed over the next two terms.

Admissions Tutor: programme

#### **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 department, there are considerable computing and technical facilities, including 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. Further PCs are located in the student common room for student use.

The School employs a 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. It contains elements of the former British Council English Teaching Information Centre library collection, and 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 Languages and European 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**

Students graduating from this programme are equipped to take up senior teaching and administration posts within the field of language teaching. Depending on their specialisms, they will also be equipped to take up positions in teacher training / education, curriculum planning, language testing, publishing and other language- related professions.

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

N/A

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

The MA programme in Applied Linguistics aims to introduce participants to current ways of describing the grammatical, lexical, phonological and discoursal systems of language; to examine the ways in which concepts from the disciplines of linguistics, education, sociolinguistics, psycholinguistics and psychology can contribute to our understanding of how languages are taught, learnt and used; to describe and critically evaluate current developments in language teaching, especially in course design, methodology, and assessment; and to develop expertise in undertaking and evaluating research in language use and language learning .

More specifically, the aims of the programme are:

- to introduce participants to current approaches to the description of the grammatical, lexical, phonological and discoursal systems of language (with specific reference to English);

- to examine the ways in which concepts from the disciplines of linguistics, education, sociolinguistics, psycholinguistics and psychology can contribute to our understanding of how languages are taught, learnt and used;
- to describe and critically evaluate current developments in language teaching, especially in course design and management, methodology, and assessment;
- to develop expertise in undertaking and evaluating research in language use, language learning and teaching.

## Programme Outcomes

### *Knowledge and Understanding*

#### **A. Knowledge and understanding of:**

1. The production and description of the sound system of English.
2. The main features of the grammatical system of English as described from a functional perspective.
3. The lexical systems of English.
4. The systems underlying the production of appropriate, coherent and cohesive English discourse, and the ways of describing these.
5. Theories of L2 acquisition relating to learning in general, to interlanguage, and to environmental and individual factors.
6. The concepts and approaches involved in the study of the relationship between language and society.
7. Different types of research, requirements of effective research, techniques of data-gathering, basic descriptive and inferential statistical methods, requirements of academic dissertations in the field.

Depending on choice of options:

8. Theory and pedagogical implications derived from within the broad areas of:

- language curriculum design,
- the four language skills,
- language use and learning in specific domains or circumstances
- language assessment
- information technology and computer-based language corpora

9. Theories of language acquisition and use, including psycholinguistics, child language development, inter-cultural communication and the role of English in the world.

10. Specialised studies and applications of linguistics in the areas of phonology and grammar.

#### *Teaching/learning methods and strategies*

Lectures  
Seminars, with occasional student presentations  
Tutorials for assignment guidance

*Assessment*  
Mainly by assignments requiring essays of different lengths.

Dissertation

*Skills and other attributes*

**B. Intellectual skills** – able to:

1. develop a coherent and logical discussion or argument in speech or writing
2. analyse and solve problems
3. operationalise abstract concepts for testing of hypotheses
4. assimilate rapidly-evolving concepts and models of language and language learning
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 pedagogical problems and issues.
8. plan, carry out and present an extended independent investigation of a research topic

*Teaching/learning methods and strategies*

Lectures  
Seminars, with occasional student presentations  
Tutorials

*Assessment*

Mainly by assignments requiring essays of different lengths.

Dissertation

**C. Practical skills** – able to:

1. perceive the phonological features of spoken English and transcribe them using an IPA-based phonetic alphabet.
2. analyse and describe written English sentences at the levels of clause, phrase and word.
3. analyse and describe samples of discourse, using one or more descriptive frameworks.

In addition, depending on modules taken and / or research undertaken, students will be able to do some of the following:

4. design a syllabus for a group of language learners, on the basis of a needs analysis and assessment of resources and other contextual factors.
5. evaluate materials used in the teaching of English language skills.
6. design a language test for a specified group of test-takers.
7. create, organise and analyse a computer-based language corpus.
8. design and administer a language-oriented survey, involving a questionnaire or interview.
9. carry out a statistical analysis of language or language-related data, using appropriate descriptive and/or inferential statistics
10. describe and analyse the grammatical, lexical, discursal and phonological systems of languages other than English.

*Teaching/learning methods and strategies*

Lectures, seminars and tutorials.

*Assessment*

Practical sections in assignments and examinations  
Relevant sections in the dissertation

**D. Transferable skills** – In addition to Intellectual skills in C above:

able to:

1. use IT (word processing, using standard and statistical software)
2. define a research topic and mount a principled investigation by means of hypothesis-formulation and testing
3. give oral presentations
4. work as part of a team
5. use library resources
6. manage time
7. formulate and implement career plans

***Teaching/learning methods and strategies***

Lectures, seminars and tutorials, including special Study Skills classes.

***Assessment***

Items 1, 5 and 6 are assessed under the organisation and presentation criteria for marking assignments and the dissertation. Item 2 is assessed by research proposal and dissertation.

Item 4 is assessed in the work produced for an examination taken for one 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 be expected 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 the module description and in the programme handbook. The University reserves the right to modify this specification in unforeseen circumstances, or where the process of academic development and feedback from students, quality assurance processes or external sources, such as professional bodies, requires a change to be made. In such circumstances, a revised specification will be issued.**