



Durham  
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# Liberal Arts at Durham: an Introduction

Open Days

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Presented by:

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# Open Days Visit Day Schedule

- The Liberal Arts programme
- Planning your studies/support
- Q&A
- Visit other departmental presentations if you can!

# The Liberal Arts Programme

- The Programme
- Subjects and Structure
- The Year Abroad
- The Placement Year
- Planning your Programme
- Subject Requirements
- Student Support at all Levels
- Graduate Destinations
- Testimonials
- Contact Information

# Liberal Arts Programmes

- Liberal Arts LA01
- Liberal Arts (with Year Abroad) LA02
- Liberal Arts (with Placement Year) LA03

# The Programme: an overview

- **Liberal Arts – a Combined Honours programme**
  - Liberal Arts, like *Combined Honours in the Social Sciences*, is a multidisciplinary degree programme which gives its students the opportunity to design their own degree
  - Liberal Arts – the successor to *Combined Honours in Arts* – makes it possible for students to combine up to four subjects in the Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences.
    - A typical program includes three subjects in year one and two in later years; but the programme is flexible.

# Liberal arts vs single/joint honours

- In Single Honours programmes, you study *one* subject, and you can only take a limited number of modules in other subjects, often only one per year.
- In Joint Honours programmes, you study *two* subjects, on a 50/50 basis, but you cannot take modules in other subjects.
- Liberal Arts Students take the same modules as Single Honours and Joint Honours students, taking part in the same lectures, seminars, and tutorials, and being assessed in the same way by a combination of essays, examinations, and research projects in their relevant departments (more on student support for all this later). You're a part of each department!



- This means that LA is a little more complicated than other degree programmes; and also no ‘taster sessions’ or tours of the department:
- This is the result of the greater freedom and flexibility of the LA programme; LA is a platform to let **you** accomplish what you want to at Durham; or to explore ideas and possibilities across disciplines.
- LA students get to devise their own degree, combining synergistic elements and breakout outside of (sometimes) artificial discipline boundaries
- LA students develop the ability to thrive in a range of different environments, learn to deal with different expectations, and often develop a sense of initiative and independence—valuable skills after graduation and on the job market
  
- We’ll talk about how to craft your own unique degree programme in the second half of the presentation and show some examples of this.

# It's an exciting time for LA at Durham!

- Liberal Arts has been expanding at Durham in recent years
- Three academic members of staff (previously: one)
- New interdisciplinary modules are being rolled out in this and the next two years: sources of the self, a module on aesthetics (the sublime); narratives of civilisation; and a new employability module
  - LA students are highly encouraged to take these modules!
- Interdisciplinary dissertation being rolled out
- We are building a more robust LA social environment
- We've been working to provide strong mentoring and forge robust relationships with other departments (more on this in second half of the presentation).

# Subjects

- **Subjects in the Arts and Humanities:**

Classics and Ancient History

English Literature

History

Music

Philosophy

Theology and Religious Studies

Visual Arts

Arabic

Chinese

French

German

Italian

Japanese

Russian

Spanish

(Languages through MLAC or CFLS)

# Subjects

- **Subjects in the Social Sciences:**

Anthropology

Archaeology

Business

Economics

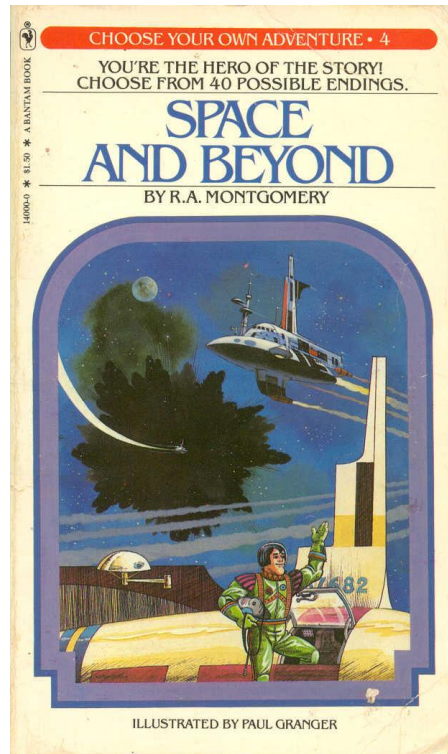
Education

Geography

Politics/International Relations

Sociology

# Choose your own adventure!



## Top 10

### UK university

Ranked 6th in The Complete University Guide

Ranked 5th in The Guardian University Guide

(both as of 2022)

# Subjects: general regulations

- **The 50% rule (important!):**

Each year, **at least 50% of modules must be in subjects in the Arts and Humanities** – so up to 50% of modules can be in subjects in the Social Sciences

- Subject and module combinations must be timetable-compatible
  - Some flexibility with seminars; recordings of sessions can help, too.
- Subject and module combinations must be intellectually coherent
- It is only possible to take modules in subjects in the Sciences, such as Mathematics or Psychology, if there is a compelling academic case to do so—this is done on a case by case basis

# Subjects

- Some students combine subjects in which Durham does not have a separate programme, like *English Literature and French*, or *History and Theology*, or *Philosophy and Classics*
- Other students choose to combine subjects in which Durham does have a separate programme, like *English Literature and Philosophy*, or *Modern European Languages and History*, so that they can study them in a more flexible way and take modules in other subjects too
- Since students can take subjects in the Arts and Humanities *and* the Social Sciences, they can focus on combinations such as *History and Politics*, or *Philosophy and Economics*, or *Theology and Anthropology*, or combine *Arabic* or *Chinese* with *Business*, or *Politics*, or *Economics*

# Structure of the degree

## **Three year programme** (remember the 50% rule):

- **Year 1:**
  - 120 credits from three or four subjects (= six modules total)
- **Year 2:**
  - 120 credits from two, three, or four subjects
- **Year 3:**
  - a research project plus 80 credits from two or three subjects

## **Four year programme:**

- **Year 3 (in the 4-year programmes):**
  - Modern Languages Year Abroad / Study Abroad / Placement
- **Year 4 (in the 4 year programmes):**
  - a research project plus 80 credits from two or three subjects



# Two terrific opportunities: Study Abroad and Placement

- Liberal Arts students can take an additional year of study: either study abroad at a partner institution, or a practical work-placement activity
- Tremendous opportunity to develop language proficiency and/or real-life job experience
- More time to consider undergraduate dissertation opportunities
- Funding as available for exchanges; a placement typically involves remuneration for work (ranging around £15-25k)
- New Arts and Humanities in the Workplace module (year II)
- Both of these programmes are OPTIONAL, but are definitely worth thinking about
- Students taking one of these options will have a slightly different LA pathway toward their degree, as described in the previous slide

# The Year Abroad

- **Modern Languages Year Abroad**
  - We highly encourage students to study modern languages – either as one or more of their ‘principal subjects’, enabling them to study and/or work abroad in Year 3 of the four-year programme, or as a minor subject via the Centre for Foreign Language Study (CFLS)
  - Students who study one or two languages as ‘principal subjects’ automatically transfer to the four-year programme at the end of Year 1, and start planning their Year Abroad at the start of Year 2
  - In the Modern Languages Year Abroad, some students study at a university, some teach English language in high schools, and some undertake internships in companies or other types of organisation

# The Year Abroad

- **Study Abroad – Exchange Programmes**

- Students can also apply to study abroad through one of Durham University's undergraduate exchange programmes – at present, the *Turing Scheme*, the successor to the *Erasmus +* programme, involving universities in Europe; and the *Overseas Exchange Programme*, involving a selection of our partner universities in Canada, the USA, Singapore, Hong Kong, Taiwan, South Korea, Japan, Australia, and New Zealand
- Students who are offered a place to study abroad transfer to the four-year programme at the end of Year 2
- In the Year Abroad, students undertake an agreed programme of study which includes their principal subjects, but are encouraged to take classes in other subjects as well
- Usually assessed on a pass/fail basis

# The Placement Year

- **The Placement Year**
  - Students can also apply to undertake an extended placement, in an organisation in the UK or abroad, which consists of at least 40 weeks of professional-level work experience
  - Students whose placement proposals are accepted transfer over to the four-year programme at the end of Year 2
  - During the Placement Year, students are required to complete a placement assessment, approved, in advance, by the Director of Liberal Arts, which would typically take the form of a project or a portfolio of work relating to your broader Liberal Arts programme
  - Assessed on a pass/fail basis

# Pause for Q+A

In the next section we'll cover:

- Picking a theme for your programme
  - Examples of themes
  - Student Support in LA
  - Graduate prospects
  - Testimonials
- 
- Any questions on the regulations or broad themes we've been discussing?

# Planning your LA Studies: how to choose what's right for you



- Some students come in with very specific ideas and plans for their course of study. That's great and really helpful! But do try to take a class or two outside your comfort zone—you'll find unexpected synergies and new perspectives, that's part of Liberal Arts, too!
- It's totally ok if you don't know exactly what you want to do—the first year is a chance to explore and figure out what you like!
- (and unlike SH programmes, you aren't tied to one discipline in case you don't like it)

# Things to keep in mind

- We ***highly recommend*** you take our new interdisciplinary module, Sources of the Self, which is a Liberal Arts-run module that draws upon a wide range of different disciplines and lecturers across the Arts and Humanities to consider
  - “the most basic and immediate scale of relations between self and other: individual connections between one person and another, in the form of psychology, ethics, and religious faith. What does it mean to be a human being? Are there any constants to human nature? What is the scope, if any, of individual human agency? What various conceivable internal and external forces shape us each as individuals into who we are?”
  - I’ll be giving a lecture on social ethics in Buddhism and Stoicism!
- It’s a great chance to meet LA friends and to figure out what subjects you want to continue on with in year 2.



# Things to keep in mind

- Think about taking up (or studying at a higher level) a foreign language. It's a great job skill, expands study abroad options later in your degree, and is generally an intellectual rigorous thing to do!
- There are many courses in other departments that are relevant to your course of study, including in many subjects that are not available at A-Levels. Try to take at least some of them, even if it's outside your core disciplines—that's what Liberal Arts is all about!

# Don't forget to Explore!

## (especially in year 1)

- For example, Durham has strong Departments of Philosophy and Theology—issues raised or skills developed in courses in these disciplines have wide application, whatever you study (e.g. arguing well is important in any area; religion is and has been profoundly influential in most, if not all, areas of human culture and history)
- Or Classics and Ancient History: courses here allow you to make sense of historical appeals to and analogies with past events
- Remember, there are tons of history courses outside of the History Department—if you are having trouble finding or registering for a History course, check out historical offerings elsewhere.

# Move from Subject to Theme



- First years tend to choose modules by the subjects they have liked at school.
- Second years start to think about modules in a more thematic way so that they can build a programme of study around areas such as the Cold War; social policy; economic inequality; belonging and identity; the history of art; the reception of classical antiquity.
- Third years undertake a focused dissertation drawing upon their LA programme.

# Some examples of degree themes

- Exploring Shakespeare's plays through their use of Classical sources (English and Classics)
- Exploring human nature (philosophy and anthropology)
- Exploring the way religious ideas are communicated through art and culture (theology, music, and visual arts)
- Exploring the emergence of China as a major economic power (history, Chinese, and business—with a year abroad or placement?)
- Each of these themes allows LA students to grapple with an issue in an interdisciplinary way that single honours students would be hard pressed to imitate; LA students can do things other students can't do!

# Subject Requirements

## Subject-specific entry requirements

- Students must meet subject-specific entry requirements in order to take any modules in particular subjects. Examples:
- **English Literature**
  - A at A level (or equivalent) in English Literature (or Language/Lit)
- **History**
  - A at A level (or equivalent) in History
- **Music**
  - A at A level (or equivalent) in Music
- **Economics**
  - A at A level (or equivalent) in Maths

# Subject Requirements

- **Languages (as principal subjects) – advanced:**  
**Chinese / French / German / Italian / Japanese / Russian / Spanish**
  - A at A level (or equivalent) in the relevant language
- **Languages (as principal subjects) – *ab initio* (1):**  
**Arabic / German / Italian / Russian / Spanish**
  - A at A level (or equivalent) in any modern language
- **Languages (as principal subjects) – *ab initio* (2):**  
**Chinese / Japanese**
  - A at A level (or equivalent) in any modern language is desirable, but not essential, since it is not essential for the Chinese Studies and Japanese Studies programmes

# Starting from scratch: languages

Don't have that proficiency in a language already?

- That's ok! The centre for foreign language study (CFLS) provides training from the beginning.
- Some other departments offer languages as well (e.g. Greek, Hebrew, Latin) which can be taken without prerequisites.

# Mentoring and support

Multiple levels of support; this is an area that the new LA staff has been working on for several years to better support the studies of our students:

- LA staff advising: general information meetings at points throughout the year; weekly office hours (for individual advising).
  - Ex.: talk about theme and trajectory of your degree. Help dealing with departmental regulation problems.
- Department-specific advisors: each department has a dedicated LA contact.
  - Ex.: talk about departmental expectations or module progression in this area
- College, mental health, and other academic support
  - Ex.: pastoral support; academic training on study skills



# Graduate Destinations

- Graduates of multidisciplinary programmes offer employers a highly valuable set of skills – not only in, and across, their specialist subjects, but also with regard to creativity, flexibility, adaptability, planning and time management, and the capacity to work independently
- The ‘graduate profile’ of our graduates is similar to that of graduates of many programmes in the Faculty of Arts and Humanities
  - some graduates go on to *postgraduate programmes*, in Durham, Oxford, Cambridge, and other universities in the UK and overseas
  - some graduates go on to *professional training*, in preparation for careers in sectors such as law, education, and financial services
  - some graduates go directly into their *graduate careers*, in a wide range of private, public, and not-for-profit contexts in the UK and overseas

# Graduate Destinations

- 96% of graduates in employment and/or in further study six months after graduating – well above the Durham University average of 89%
- Some of the recent graduates of the programme have gone on to:
  - Masters and PhD programmes, in English, History, History of Art, Music, Politics and International Relations, and other subjects, in Durham, Oxford, Cambridge, Edinburgh, St Andrews, and London
  - PGCEs, Law conversion courses, and other graduate programmes, relating to journalism, financial services, management, and so on
  - careers in teaching, banking, auditing, marketing, public relations, human resources, publishing, retail management, the civil service, arts management, public administration, and the voluntary sector

# Testimonials



*'Every person is unique, and so is the programme of study undertaken by each and every student who is taking this programme. The wide range of my interests is reflected in my programme of study, which shows everyone else, including employers, what makes me different, and how I stand out from the crowd.'*

**Jennifer Chan**  
graduated June 2015

Retail Development Manager,  
Cathay Pacific Airways, Hong Kong

# Testimonials



*'The programme has allowed me to specialise in my primary subject while exploring a broad range of interests in a truly diverse classroom setting. This unique and highly flexible programme has given me the space to grow as a student, created global connections, and put me in the best position possible for life after Durham.'*

**Nick Durrans**

graduated June 2016

MSc in International Management ESADE /  
MSc in Business Analytics, ESADE

Business Operations Analyst,  
Stuart Logistics, Barcelona

# Testimonials



*'Liberal Arts gives you the freedom and the flexibility to create a degree which truly reflects your interests. Studying a range of modules in and beyond the subjects in which I have specialised, I have gained new perspectives and been challenged to think beyond conventional boundaries. The course has contributed hugely to how much I have enjoyed my time at Durham, and has given me a solid foundation for my future career and life after university.'*

**Natalia Zaidi**

graduated June 2017

Teaching English, Vietnam

# Testimonials



*'The flexibility of the programme has inspired me to pursue my intellectual interests. Through the subjects I have chosen to specialise in, I have acquired a wide range of skills, giving me the confidence to take on any challenge after university. The programme has been central to my experience as a Durham undergraduate, and it has enabled me to develop the tools that I need to succeed in my future career.'*

**Ysabel Dela Rosa**  
graduated June 2018

MSc in International Management, Bath

International Commercial Executive, Dyson

# Contact Information

- Dr Sara Uckelman      Acting Director of Liberal Arts
- Dr. Nathan Gilbert      Deputy Director of Liberal Arts
- [Dr. Nathan Gilbert      Associate Director of Liberal Arts]

Further particulars:

[www.dur.ac.uk/liberal.arts/](http://www.dur.ac.uk/liberal.arts/)

Please do get in touch!

General inquiries or to ask to get in touch with LA students:

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