

## Forensic Linguistics MA (Distance Learning)

Study MA Forensic Linguistics with Aston University, home of the world-leading Aston Institute for Forensic Linguistics. Take your linguistics skills to the next level and improve the delivery of justice through the analysis of language.

[\*This programme is also available to study on-campus.\*](#)

### **Location: Delivered via online teaching**

Course type

Online / distance learning

Course format

No placements

Duration

1 year (full-time)

2 years (part-time)

UCAS code(s)

N/A

Start date

Overview

Explore MA Forensic Linguistics (Distance Learning) at Aston University

Society matters podcast

### **Whatever the matter, Society matters.**

Hear about some of the fascinating academic research taking place into current issues facing our society.

[\*\*Click here to listen now.\*\*](#)

### **Why study a postgraduate degree at Aston University?**

Hear from MBA student Monique Farquharson.

NUE careers award

The Careers and Placements team at Aston University has been voted 'best university placement team' in the National University Employability (NUE) Awards 2022.

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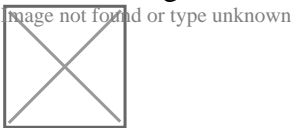
- [Strong links with police give you unique access to real world data for your teaching and research work.](#)
- [Social Sciences at Aston University was ranked 26th in the world for ‘citations’ \(THE World University Ranking, 2022\).](#)
- [We’re ranked 22nd overall in the UK out of 121 institutions \(Guardian, 2023\).](#)
- [Aston University is ranked 4th overall in the UK by Uni Compare users \(University Compare, 2022\).](#)

“The course at Aston University is fantastic because it brings together theory and practical application with fascinating real-life data collected by the Institute. The teaching is excellent, and the inspiring passion of the tutors is contagious! I really felt like they were investing in each of us throughout the year. The course has a broad range of topics within forensic linguistics whilst still being able to really get into the detail of the language and focus on areas that interest you most. It has been the most exciting year of my study to date.”

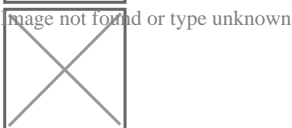
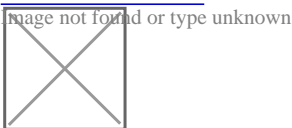
**Arabella Graves**  
**MA Forensic Linguistics**

[How to apply](#)

Forensic Linguistics MA (Distance Learning)



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Teaching Excellence Framework Gold award logo

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**Arabella Graves**  
**MA Forensic Linguistics**

# Course outline and modules

**This Forensic Linguistic masters course is designed to help linguistics students take their studies to the next level and enter the exciting discipline of forensic linguistics. Alongside advanced language-description modules, you will learn about legal and forensic contexts, and how linguists critically engage with the language of law and provide linguistic evidence in a variety of legal contexts.**

Please note the online version requires attendance at timetabled classes every week, much the same as a campus-based programme would. Timings of sessions will be dependent on class numbers and the time zones of students who are enrolled.

## What you'll learn

The MA Forensic Linguistics course aims to expand your linguistic analysis skills and understanding so that you can apply them to forensic texts, and in forensic and legal contexts.

You will learn from some of the world's leading academics in the field of forensic linguistics, based at our research institute - the Aston Institute for Forensic Linguistics.

There is a strong ethos throughout this programme of forensic linguistics as an application of linguistics. You will study and improve your knowledge and abilities in the linguistic analysis of spoken and written language, in contexts such as police interviews and courtroom interactions, and you will learn how linguists apply their methods to aid police investigations and provide evidence in court.

The course has strong links with the police so you will get unique access to real-world data for your coursework.

Our course is applied in nature, giving you a chance to gain valuable hands-on experiences involving real forensic and legal data. It includes practical project work as well as academic essay assessments.

Successfully completing the taught parts of the course will enable you to progress onto completing a 15,000-word research dissertation as the final part of the course. Dissertation projects allow students to research an area in depth and are an excellent grounding for PhD study or for employment beyond the programme.

## Modules

This programme is designed for students of English language and/or linguistics and aims to expand students' linguistic skills and understanding such that they can apply them to forensic texts and contexts. There is a strong ethos throughout this programme that forensic linguistics is an application of linguistics and thus students study and improve their knowledge and abilities in the linguistic analysis of spoken and written language. Alongside the linguistics modules students learn about the relevant legal and forensic contexts and how linguists have developed understandings and critiques of the language of the law and how linguists analyse language to provide evidence in a variety of legal contexts. To complete the programme students complete a short practical project or placement and then research for a dissertation.

### Core modules

**Analysing Discourse** (15 credits)

This module aims to familiarise students with the fundamentals of text analysis, beginning with a consideration of the nature of 'text' and 'discourse'. It will provide an overview of major theories and methodologies of discourse analysis and enable students to make informed methodological choices when conducting their own analyses. On successful completion of the module, students will understand key research relating to written and spoken discourse in a range of settings; identify and critically evaluate different approaches to research into written and spoken discourse; describe research techniques associated with these approaches and discuss considerations relevant to their application and combination; make judgements regarding the suitability of their own projects.

### **Corpus Linguistics (15 credits)**

This module will provide you with advanced digital analysis skills in order to investigate large linguistic and literary datasets. You will learn how to apply theories and methods from corpus linguistics to analyse large and complex corpora, developing skills in digital literacy which can be applied to any area of academic study and to a wide range of professional contexts.

### **Research Methods (15 credits)**

The module will equip students to critically evaluate research, and conduct their own research to appropriate standards, including ethics. By the end of the module students will be able to: evaluate the effectiveness and limitations of various research methods; choose the specific research methods appropriate for their own work (especially the dissertation); understand the different paradigms associated with different research traditions; appreciate the ethical dimension within any research project; and understand specific approaches related to forensic linguistic evidence.

### **Linguistics in Legal Contexts (30 credits)**

This module introduces students to the key research methods in the field of forensic linguistics and develops understanding of the relationship between language and law. It introduces methodological tools and their application in the forensic context and consolidates student knowledge in key areas of linguistic description. After this module students will be able to conduct their own analyses of language in legal contexts, improve their understanding of the interaction between legal context and texts, have a sharpened awareness of the significance of linguistic choices and structures, and improve their abilities in detailed language description.

### **Language as Evidence (30 credits)**

This module introduces students to the key research in the field of investigative forensic linguistics, extending students' experience and abilities in collecting and working with linguistic data in a forensic context and allowing students to produce and critique mock expert witness reports as might be used in the UK courts. It will consolidate student knowledge in key areas of linguistic description. Students will improve their understanding of the interaction between legal context and texts; have a sharpened awareness of the significance of linguistic choices and structures, and methods of linguistic description; be able to describe, analyse and critique forensic expert witness work in the area of textual forensic linguistics; present an analysis of their own design in writing either as an essay or as a mock expert witness report.

### **Practical Applications in Forensic Linguistics (15 credits)**

This module aims to extend students' experience and abilities in collecting and working with forensic linguistic data and contexts and develop students' sensitivities to forensic data and ethics. It develops students' abilities as independent learners to devise and produce an appropriate forensic linguistic project or report on their learning and enables students to experience and reflect on the process of applying academic research in professional/'real world' practice. Students will be able to collect and analyse suitable forensically relevant data under time-limited conditions and be able to conduct their own analyses of language in legal contexts.

### **Dissertation (60 credits)**

Here students will demonstrate their ability to design, conduct and report the results of a research project in the subject domain relevant to their masters programme. They will work independently, under the guidance of a supervisor.

## **Entry requirements**

### Entry requirements

#### **One of the following:**

- A good UK honours degree, minimum Upper Second Class (2:1) in English Language, Linguistics, or a related subject. Please note that transcripts must indicate some studies of linguistics.
- Equivalent overseas degree recognised by Aston University.

#### **Subject specific requirements:**

- Applicants must also provide evidence of Mathematics - C/4 or above at GCSE (or equivalent)

#### **As well as:**

- Two professional references – at least one must be from an academic referee.
- An official academic transcript of your university grades to date.
- A completed application form.

### International students

- Applicants whose first language is not English will be required to provide evidence of an English language qualification. [Find out more about our English language requirements.](#)
- For more information about qualifications view our [Aston in your country](#) webpage.
- For International Students intending to do a foundation year. [Click here to find out more.](#)
- Application: We recommend that overseas students apply before the end of June due to visa requirements as these can take a few weeks to process.

### Extensive work experience

We recognise the value of extensive professional experience. If you do not have the academic qualifications, but have extensive and relevant professional experience and a proven ability to succeed, we would welcome your application.

The information contained on this website details the typical entry requirements for this course for the most commonly offered qualifications. Applicants with alternative qualifications may wish to enquire with the relevant admissions teams prior to application whether or not their qualifications are deemed acceptable. For less commonly encountered qualifications this will be judged on a case-by-case basis in consultation with the academic admissions tutor.

*Please note, if you do not meet the subject-specific requirements for this programme, you may be considered for an alternative programme which may be better suited to your academic/professional background. If you receive an offer for an alternative programme and do not wish to move forward with this, please contact the Admissions team at [pgadmissions@aston.ac.uk](mailto:pgadmissions@aston.ac.uk).*

## Speak to our Admissions Team

If you have any questions about the application process please get in touch with our postgraduate admissions team:

Email: [pgadmissions@aston.ac.uk](mailto:pgadmissions@aston.ac.uk)

Call: 0121 204 3200 (Please note this line is open Monday-Friday between 10am-4pm)

[Please click here](#) for guidance on completing the postgraduate application.

## Our programme directors are our experts

**Nicci MacLeod** Profile picture unknown

**Dr Nicci MacLeod**  
Programme Director, MA Forensic Linguistics

If you have any questions about the course or modules you will be studying you can [email me via this link](#) and I will be happy to answer your queries.

## Learning, teaching and assessment

## **Learning and teaching**

You will take part in interactive seminars, presentations and group work as well as attending lectures and tutorials. There are also opportunities for individual research and supervised practical work.

The Aston Institute for Forensic Linguistics hosts wide and varied events, intending to build upon a history of collaboration between academic researchers, professionals and society. Events range from weekly topic-specific seminars, through to an annual conference, with the key aim to help improve the delivery of justice through the analysis of language. All MA students can attend these events as part of their studies without extra cost.

## **Study skills**

You will be allocated a personal tutor at the start of your course; this member of academic staff can offer individual study advice and guidance and is there to help support your studies.

Furthermore, you will have access to:

- Our Virtual Learning Environment – Blackboard – to support your studies, including Blackboard discussion groups.
- The University Library, including over 25,000 books and a wide range of electronic journals. The library has special provision in place to help part time and distance learning students access the resources.
- University-wide facilities such as the Careers Service, Students' Advice Centre, Students' Jobshop, Counselling Service, Sports Facilities and the Chaplaincy.

## **Assessment**

In the taught part of the programme assessments are diverse and include traditional academic essays, data analysis tasks, oral presentations and mock expert witness report writing.

Successful completion of the taught modules is a precondition for proceeding to a 15,000-word dissertation leading to the MA.

## **Programme Director(s)**

**Dr Nicci MacLeod**

## **Fees and scholarships**

**UK students (2024/25): £11,850**

**International students (2024/25): £11,850**

\*Part-time students pay a pro-rata version of full-time fees.

The United Kingdom government has confirmed that European Union (EU), other European Economic Area (EEA) and Swiss nationals commencing academic courses in England from August 2021 will no longer be charged the same tuition rates as home students. [Further information can be found here.](#)

Tuition fees for students are reviewed annually and may increase in subsequent years in line with inflation linked to the Retail Price Index (RPI) to take account of the University's increased costs of delivering the Programme. Any such increase shall always be in accordance with the law. When undertaking a placement year, a placement year fee applies.

### [More information on fees and funding](#)

## UK postgraduate loans

If you're thinking about studying a masters course with us, you may be eligible for a postgraduate loan to help with course fees and living costs. [Find out more here.](#)

## Scholarships

At Aston University we are committed to supporting the most talented and hardworking students to achieve their potential by providing a range of scholarships to help lower tuition and living costs. [Find out more about our scholarships here.](#)

20 per cent postgraduate alumni scholarship

**Cost shouldn't limit your career aspirations, which is why we are delighted to offer all Aston University graduates (including exchange students) a 20% loyalty scholarship in standard taught MA, MSc and Full-time MBA course fees. Students who have completed their first degree at Aston University will receive an automatic scholarship when applying for their course. If you are not an Aston University graduate there is still a range of UK and international scholarship that you can apply for.**

This means that as an Aston University graduate applying to our **MA Forensic Linguistics (Distance Learning)** course, you could save...

**£2,370**

### UK students

*(Total saving equivalent to 20% of the annual tuition fee)*

**£2,370**

### International/EU students

*(Total saving equivalent to 20% of the annual tuition fee)*

As an Aston University graduate you will automatically qualify. For more information [visit our webpage.](#)



## Career prospects

The Careers service offer a tailored programme for MA Forensic Linguistics students exploring opportunities in police and security services and broader employment as well as the opportunity of PhD study.

Graduates of the MA in Forensic Linguistics go on to a whole variety of careers, but the course is particularly suited to those who want to further their careers in intelligence roles with the police, the security services or the city/financial services. The course is also an excellent foundation for studies at PhD level for students interested in a career in research in this important and growing area, as well as those whose existing careers would be advanced by specialised training.

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### **Aston University was recognised as the 'Best University Placement Service'.**

The Careers and Placements team at Aston University won the 'Best University Placement Service' category at the [National Undergraduate Employability \(NUE\) Awards](#) 2022. This was achieved by launching Virtual Employability Festivals and recognising the power of peer-to-peer communication by pairing 500 students looking for placements with 500 students who had completed placements.

## Frequently asked questions

Why should I study my postgraduate degree at Aston University?

There are lots of benefits of studying a postgraduate degree at Aston University.

Watch this video from MBA student, Monique, who talks about just a few of them:

## **Why should I study MA in Forensic Linguistics at Aston?**

Aston University is home to the Aston Institute for Forensic Linguistics (AIFL), which was founded in 2019 as a £6 million expansion of the former Aston Centre for Forensic Linguistics. The AIFL is the biggest department of forensic linguists in the world with a group of more than 20 academics and researchers. It combines cutting-edge research and investigative forensic practice with postgraduate teaching and professional courses. Research at the Institute involves all aspects of forensic linguistics from how the police and the courts can best work with interpreters, to the development and refinement of methods for identifying the writer of disputed forensic texts. This high-quality research ensures that both postgraduate and professional courses and their investigative work have a solid academic foundation.

## **What are the career prospects for graduates of the MA in Forensic Linguistics at Aston?**

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## **Chat with current students**

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[English MA \(Distance Learning\)](#)

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[Dr Robbie Love says swearing has been a part of the English language for centuries and using](#)

[NEWS - 16/09/2022](#)

[\*\*Aston University launches Research Centre for the Humanities\*\*](#)

[The Research Centre for the Humanities \(REACH\) will formally launch with an event and the first lecture in an ongoing series.](#)

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[Events - 30/03/2023](#)

[\*\*The science of swearing\*\*](#)

[More events](#)

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[We provide award-winning accommodation on our small, friendly campus in partnership with Unite Students](#)

### [Students' Union](#)

[Aston SU represents and supports around 14,000 students, providing a number of commercial and non-commercial services.](#)

### [Birmingham life](#)

[Aston University is in a great, central location. Ideally positioned in the centre of Birmingham - one of the youngest cities in Europe - our campus is only a 10 minute walk to the city centre.](#)

### [Clubs and societies](#)

[Joining a club or society is one of the best ways to get the most out of your time here at Aston. With over 130 student-led groups we have something for everyone.](#)

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[Here's Sports at Aston. Discover what's happening on the Aston University campus at the Sir Doug Ellis Woodcock Sports Centre.](#)

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The Hub is a central location on the Ground Floor of the Main Building where most of the student support services are located.

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