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languages@reading.ac.uk

DEPARTMENT OF LANGUAGES AND CULTURES

Stand out from the crowd

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 Department of Languages and Cultures at Reading

English Literature & Modern Languages

So, you love escaping into a good story? Studying literature will be even more profound in combination with a foreign language.

- Learn to read global literature in its original language.
- Learn about translating and publishing, to and from English.
- Understand literature as part of European and global histories.

Without the Brothers Grimm, would we have Philip Pullman?

Business Studies & Modern Languages

BMW, Mercedes Benz, Equinor, Nestlé, Dior, UBS, Inditex, Credit Agricole, UniCredit, L'Oreal.

Some of the world's biggest companies are at your European doorstep, if only you learn to speak their languages!

- Learn the languages of your trading partners.
- Gain the advantage of a deep knowledge of their culture and understand how they approach business.
- Get proficient in the business vocabulary of the language you study and explore culture specific business models on the way.

English Language & Modern Languages

You learn infinitely more about English when you also study a foreign language!

- Compare and contrast their vocabulary, grammar and syntax.
- Understand European and global history and cultures through languages and vice versa.
- Study intercultural communication.
- Analyse the sociological and political power of languages across national contexts.

The HISTORY [Greek] of the English LANGUAGE [French] is RICH [Proto-Germanic] and 80 PER CENT [Latin] of its WORDS [Proto-Germanic] come from other languages.

International Relations & Modern Languages

International Relations relies on transnational and intercultural understanding. This joint degree gives you the communication skills you need.

- Learn a language and study non-anglophone political cultures.
- Study multi-lingual approaches to political participation, decision-making and international cooperation.
- Understand how arts and media impact politics and catalyse societal change.

'Whatever our differences, in our interdependent world, we stand or fall together.' (Kofi Annan)

Economics & Modern Languages

Adam Smith said: 'No society can surely be flourishing and happy, of which the far greater part of the members is poor and miserable.'

But nations differ in their understanding of poverty and growth and how to approach them. Studying a language allows you to grasp such differences and make informed economic decisions.

- Learn a language and have first-hand access to other national economic debates.
- Acquire in-depth knowledge of other cultures and apply it to understand their economic traditions and models.
- Boost your economic thinking by relating it to sociological, political, historical cases studied in the languages.

History & Modern Languages

'History is not the past, but a map of the past, drawn from a particular point of view, to be useful to the modern traveller.' (Henry Glassie)

The more languages and cultures you study in depth, the further you will be able to travel as a historian, using that 'map of the past'.

- Learn another language and read sources in the original to understand even their subtle points.
- Broaden your sources of historical information to include cinema, music, philosophy, literature and art.
- Enjoy in-depth study of national histories linked to the language you learn.

Combined skills make you stand out

There are many graduates from Politics, Business, Economics, History, and English on the UK labour market.

Research indicates that 20% to 25% of job vacancies explicitly require foreign language proficiency and 33% of UK employers report difficulties filling these positions specifically due to a lack of applicants with sufficient foreign language competences. If you combine skills, you could boost your chances of finding a job.

And did you know that multilingual employees in the UK can earn an average pay uplift of 11.5%?

The University of Reading ranks 7th for graduate salary for Languages and area studies after five years*

*The Telegraph ranking, June 2025

Your Year Abroad

One truly special element of studying a Modern Language (including as a joint subject) is the opportunity to study, work or teach abroad in France, Germany, Austria, Spain, Italy, and Latin America.

We offer substantial administrative support to help our students undertake and make the most of their Year Abroad.

In the third year of your degree, with financial support from British and European governments (Turing Scheme, ERASMUS Programme*) you will be able to practise your target language on a day-to-day basis and immerse yourself in the experience of other cultures, other ways of doing things, and other ways of looking at the world.

* Please check **Study Abroad – outgoing funding** for details.

Myth 1: **“ Studying two subjects is double the amount of work. ”**

Busted: You'll study exactly the same number of credits, modules and standardised time allocation per credits as in any other undergraduate degree.

Myth 2: **“ Studying two subjects means they confuse and distract from each other. ”**

Busted: Joint honours degrees are made of complementary subjects; this means, studying a language and its culture takes up and broadens many aspects of your other subject. In addition, you'll come out with a broader set of skills! What's not to like?

Myth 3: **“ Employers prefer graduates with a streamlined profile. ”**

Busted: You might be competing for jobs that require a degree in Politics, Economics, English – but graduates with additional language and intercultural skills have a competitive edge compared to single subject graduates.



“ There's a plethora of different transferable skills from each half of the degree. My language skills were a big talking point in my job interviews. Having both Economics and French and being able to speak French to a high standard in the work environment, made me stand out from other candidates. ”

Henry Paton
BA French and Economics
CIB Account Specialist
for the Canadian Market
at JP Morgan Chase



“ Employers almost find it doubly impressive that I have a joint honours degree. It's like I have two separate degrees, and I'm seen as an expert in two different areas. ”

Sophie Murray
BA Spanish and English Language
Marketing for PETA Ltd, an
award-winning training organisation

“ For me, studying International Relations and German means getting deeper into the processes I've learnt about in Politics: without the language, I wouldn't have been able to work in international transport and customs during my year abroad in Germany and Austria and therefore wouldn't have seen how sanctions, environmental rulings etc. really play out in real-world business, regulations, trade, and what 'global relations' mean in culture specific contexts. ”

Emily Tasker
German and International Relations

“ Choosing to study a Joint Honours degree turned out to be one of the most rewarding decisions of my life. I had not studied a language since pre-GCSE and was originally aiming to study just Business on its own, yet combining Modern Languages and Business at the University of Reading opened a door I didn't even know existed!

Learning Italian from scratch, immersing myself in its culture, and spending a transformative year abroad in Italy broadened my horizons far beyond language alone. I discovered new literary worlds, developed genuine intercultural curiosity, and made lifelong friends who shaped my experience in ways I'll never forget. Being part of the Department of Languages and Cultures gave me the freedom to grow academically, personally, and professionally, demonstrating that a Joint Honours pathway can lead to opportunities you never imagined when you first begin. ”

Nate Jones
BA Italian and Business



University of the Year for Scholarships and Bursaries*

The University offers a Commuter Bursary scheme for eligible students and a competitive Global Sustainability Leaders Scholarship scheme worth £6,000 per year of study.

* The Times and The Sunday Times
Good University Guide 2026.



Graduates with a joint honours degree with modern languages have gone on to careers in marketing, finance, international organisations, and media. They have become civil servants, journalists, international brand strategists and market analysts.

Speaking a second language allows you to engage with a wider network of potential partners, suppliers and clients.

Multi-lingual individuals often have better mental flexibility, enabling them to approach situations from multiple perspectives.

Businesses that communicate effectively across cultural and linguistic barriers gain a distinctive advantage over their competitors.
(AMBA 2024)

Study a joint honours degree with French, German, Italian or Spanish

Completely from scratch – in our intensive Beginners' classes, you can study French, German, Italian or Spanish to degree level, even if you have not studied them before

From Intermediate level – if you have some knowledge of the language up to GCSE level, you can also take it up to degree level

From Advanced level – if you have completed an A-level in the language that you'd like to study, together with your other subject.