Arts, Social Sciences and Languages

If you have a strong interest in more than one subject, such as the history of art, languages or sociology, rather than a subject relating to a specific area of work, a wide variety of careers will still be open to you after you finish your studies. You'll also gain useful transferable skills such as the ability to analyse information, solve problems and communicate effectively. There are opportunities to work in industry, commerce, government or the professions as well as the voluntary and charity work sectors.

Alternatively, you may want to pass on your enthusiasm for your subject and work as a lecturer or take on further training to become a teacher.

What areas can I work in?

Courses are split into the following sectors: general, English, history, humanities, languages, politics, religion and sociology.

Graduates in arts, social sciences and languages work in the Civil Service, local government, business, commercial, industrial and managerial posts. Work in advertising and the media attracts some. Others go into marketing or sales. Work in information technology, law, travel and tourism, and culture is also possible.

To see the routes to getting into each of these sectors, take a look at our Career Pathway.

What kind of companies can I work for?

There are a wide range of possible employers including:

- local government or Civil Service
- social work or welfare services
- community or youth work organisations
- broadcasting and media companies
- schools, colleges and universities
- charities and voluntary organisations
- retail and commerce businesses, including sales and marketing
- museums, galleries and heritage organisations.

What's the job market like?

Due to the extensive areas that arts, social sciences and language graduates can work in, it is beyond the scope of this article to detail the job market prospects for each profession.

However, it is widely agreed that graduates of arts, humanities and social sciences develop a broad range of transferable skills that employers in a wide range of sectors look for. These skills include communication, creativity, research and analysis, decision-making, problem solving and social awareness.

According to the report 'What do graduates do?' (2025/26), the most popular sector humanities graduates chose

was secondary education. Others went into a wide range of professions including advertising and marketing, public relations, finance and investments and management consultancy, confirming the wide range of employment available. [1]

The same report found that the top professional job listed for politics graduates was as business, research and administrative professionals. For sociology graduates it was police officers (sergeant and below). [1]

According to City Lit, a UK based adult education provider, the most in demand languages for UK professionals (based on job adverts) in 2026 are: German, French, Mandarin, Spanish, and Portuguese. [2]

Facts and figures

- From the academic year 2022/23, 58% of humanities graduates were in full time employment 15 months after graduating, lower than the average of 71.9% across all subjects. [1]
- Average starting salaries (for humanities graduates without significant further study) were slightly lower than the overall graduate average of £30,031. Male philosophy graduates were the exception, who earned on average £31,466 without further study. [1]
- The proportion of students engaged in further study is slightly higher for humanities compared to other subjects, with History graduates as the most likely to be in further study at 13.5%. [1]
- The proportion of students engaged in further study is slightly higher for humanities compared to other subjects, with History graduates as the most likely to be in further study at 13.3%. [1]
- In 2023, the UK was the second largest country in the global languages services market, with a contribution of 12.7%. It is forecast to contribute 14.4% in 2028, and grow at a compounded annual rate of 9.3% between 2023 and 2028. [3]
- Between January and December 2025, there were 93,800 authors, writers and translators working in the UK, compared with 99,300 in the previous year. [4]

Want to find out more?

If you are thinking of studying languages, the section 'Why study languages?' on the Association for Language Learning website may be of interest.

Sources

[1] What do graduates do? Prospects (part of Jisc) and AGCAS (2025/26)

[2] The most in demand languages for professionals in the UK (2026), CityLit () (27 March 2026)

[3] Business Gateway Market Report: Translation and Interpretation (April 2025)

[4] Annual Population Survey - Occupation by sex - UK, Nomis (December 2025)