

# [M.a. in humanities in the 21st century](https://assignbuster.com/ma-in-humanities-in-the-21st-century/)

The value and usefulness of an M. A. in Humanities in the 21st century The M. A. in Humanities is not a specialized degree but has a diverse curriculum, assuring the graduate of better communication and research skills in varied areas; hence it is a better course in terms of function and in terms of employment opportunities for the 21st century.   
The term 'humanities' which is synonymous with 'liberal arts' has its origin in the revival of classical learning that took place in the 15th and 16th centuries centering on the study of ancient Greek and Roman languages and literature, as well as ethical philosophy, rhetoric, grammar, and poetry (Anon. 1984: 10). Humanities subjects inundate students with " a deluge of readings and ivory tower philosophizing" (Shulman, 2006) and have been traditionally used to transmit the values cherished by generations (McGrory, 2007).   
Located at the core of the university, Humanities have long been deeply embedded with concerns about life, wisdom, survival, transformation, and interaction (Brown, Boyer, de Bary & Fajans, 2006). The overall benefit to society is that they have the responsibility of keeping the other disciplines honest, and this function of being a watchdog needs to be preserved (Chipman, 1995). Humanities provides general literacy that includes language skills such as grammar, spelling and the proper use of words; information gathering such as how to take notes and summarize material; thinking skills such as how to criticize an argument and how to develop arguments; and writing skills such as how to present arguments with clarity and intelligence (Hart, 1990). These are the basic skills that prepare workers to meet the world of work (Drewes, 2002).   
A degree in Humanities is not a business degree, not a science degree nor a technical certificate. Yet, the coursework done and the skills developed can be applied to virtually any profession. More than on communication skills, the focus of Humanities is on ability to learn in the abstract; solving problems through reasoning, logic and deduction; open debating; and the study of how it all fits within historical and cultural contexts (" Arts & Humanities"). As such, its value rests in being sensitive to the political consequences of differences in meaning, and in taking seriously the production, circulation and reception of ideas (Linklater, 2007).   
For the 21st century, a course in Humanities, particularly a master's course, would be valuable and useful. That it could help in terms of advancing concepts and theories in the field is clarified by Crocker (2006). He shudders at the prospect of Humanities disappearing into rigidity such that there would be neither kindness nor mercy anymore. According to him, without the Humanities, our actions would be governed by the black, white, and " very close to the line" that defines quantified reasoning. Without gray areas and multiple right answers, he said, there wouldn't be compassion in the world.   
From a professional standpoint, a Humanities degree gives one the skills and discipline to work in any variety of careers (" Arts & Humanities"). In the world of work, this is what makes it a versatile course for the 21st century. According to Torben Drewes (2002), the labour market clearly has room for, and rewards, a very broad and diverse range of skills that Humanities courses offer. Therefore, students whose interests and aptitudes lead them into the Humanities will not be financially disadvantaged by their choice.   
Works Cited   
" A Wealth of Ideas: The Value of the Humanities in Modern Society." An edited transcript of the Round Table/General Discussion involving the panel of speakers at the Colloquium and members of the audience. Accessed 25 July 2007. .   
" Arts & Humanities Degree Programs." Website: WorldWideLearn. com. Accessed 25 July 2007. .   
Anon. 1984. " On the Uses of the Humanities: Vision and Application." Report by The Hastings Centre. Institute of Society, Ethics and the Life Sciences, New York.   
Brown, L., Boyer, D., de Bary B & Fajans. J. 2006. Twenty-first Century Humanities at the Core of the University. In Lepage, G. P., Martin, C. & Mostafavi, M. Do the Humanities Have To Be Useful ISBN: 0-9785514-0-0. Library of Congress Control No: 2006925441.   
Chipman, L. 1995. 'Becoming an Independent Learner: Universities and their future'. Interviewed by Daryl Nation, Monash Distance Education, 1995.   
Crocker, K. " Imagine a World in Which There Is Only Fact." In Lepage, G. P., Martin, C. & Mostafavi, M. (Eds.). 2006. Do the Humanities Have To Be Useful ISBN: 0-9785514-0-0. Library of Congress Control No: 2006925441.   
Drewes, T. " Value added: humanities and social sciences degrees. Evidence supports long-term employment success." Spring 2002. Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations (OCUFA) Forum.   
Giles, P. & Drewes, T. " Liberal Arts Degrees and the Labour Market." Perspectives on Labour and Income, Vol. 13. No. 3 . Autumn 2001.   
Hart, D. 1990. 'The importance of the liberal arts to education: An historian's perspective' in Gibbs, Anthony M. (Ed). " The Relevance of the Humanities." Occasional Paper. No. 8. Australian Academy of the Humanities, Canberra.   
Lepage, G. P., Martin, C. & Mostafavi, M. (Eds.). 2006. Do the Humanities Have To Be Useful ISBN: 0-9785514-0-0. Library of Congress Control No: 2006925441.   
Linklater, M. A Wealth of Ideas: " The Value of the Humanities in Modern Society." An edited transcript of the Round Table/General Discussion involving the panel of speakers at the Colloquium and members of the audience. Accessed 25 July 25 2007. .   
McGrory, Kathleen. Teaching and Values: What Values Will We Take into the 21st Century   
Society for Values in Higher Education. Accessed 25 July 2007. .   
Shulman, Peter A. In Defense of HASS: A Humanist Responds. The Tech. Vol. 126. Issue 40. 22 Sept. 2006.