



Programme Specification

A statement of the knowledge, understanding and skills that underpin a taught programme of study leading to an award from
The University of Sheffield

1	Programme Title	Digital Media and Society
2	Programme Code	SPRT010
3	JACS Code	P300, L391
4	Level of Study	Postgraduate
5a	Final Qualification	Master of Arts (MA)
5b	QAA FHEQ Level	7
6a	Intermediate Qualification(s)	Postgraduate Certificate in Digital Media and Society (PGCert) – Full-time and Part-time Postgraduate Diploma in Digital Media and Society (PGDip) – Full-time and Part-time
6b	QAA FHEQ Level	Masters
7	Teaching Institution (if not Sheffield)	Not applicable
8	Faculty	Social Sciences
9	Department	Sociological Studies
10	Other Departments providing credit bearing modules for the programme	None
11	Mode(s) of Attendance	Full-time or Part-time
12	Duration of the Programme	1 year or 2 years
13	Accrediting Professional or Statutory Body	None
14	Date of production/revision	December 2017, March 2026

15. Background to the programme and subject area

Digital media technologies like apps, social media platforms, e-books, personalised ads and digital data mining tools are all around us, a core part of our everyday lives. They impact on society and are shaped by the societies in which they are developed and used, often at a rapid rate. Understanding these processes is an important part of understanding our social world. The MA Digital Media and Society focuses on the relationship between digital media and society, the forces that drive digital technological change and the challenges and opportunities that such changes present. It is aimed at students who want to develop a broad understanding of digital media and society from a sociological perspective. It equips students with advanced skills in: ways of thinking about digital society; digital media production practices; methods for carrying out digital research.

The programme is taught within the Department of Sociological Studies by a team of internationally recognised academics with specialisms in digital media, digital sociology and related topics such as surveillance, identity, personal relationships, visual cultures and the methods with which to research digital, social phenomena. The programme's location within the Department of Sociological Studies allows students to develop applied digital media projects which engage with contemporary social issues. The broader context of the Faculty of Social Sciences allows students to benefit from the research and training activities of the Sheffield Methods Institute and the Digital Society Network.

The MA Digital Media and Society equips students with the skills required for a wide range of careers and future study possibilities. There are many jobs within social and public sector organisations which require an understanding of digital media, in marketing and communications, public engagement and other departments. Charities also regularly advertise jobs for digital media managers and experts. The MA will also provide students with an excellent grounding for future doctoral study of specific topics relating to digital media in society. Jobs in user experience in digital media companies require understanding of the social aspects of usage and use contexts that the MA will develop. There is also growing demand within policy and similar fields for individuals with advanced understanding of the complex ethical issues which emerge in the digital media landscape.

Depending on the choices that students make, the MA may prepare them to work in fields such as information governance, public policy, management consultancy and non-academic research. There is an option to do an internship as part of the final dissertation in order to develop employability skills and apply skills developed on the MA in a real-world environment. The programme team will also provide information on relevant opportunities for developing employability skills available in the University as a whole, including the Erasmus+ Work Placement Scheme and the Global Leadership Initiative.

Full information about the programme is available on the department's web site:

<http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/socstudies>

16. Programme aims

The MA Digital Media and Society aims to:

1. Provide students with an up-to-date, systematic and critical awareness of the epistemologies, theories and processes through which to understand and critically evaluate contemporary digital society.
2. Develop students' awareness of the most pressing challenges posed by digital society.
3. Enable students to critically examine digital media and their fast and unpredictable development.
4. Provide comprehensive training in research methods, with an emphasis on new, digital methods.
5. Enable students to apply creative and technical skills to create digital media and related content.
6. Enable students to take creative approaches to dealing with complex issues by combining knowledge from across the domains mentioned above (theory, epistemology, method, production practice).
7. Equip students with the skills required to undertake independent social scientific research into digital society at an advanced level.
8. Foster students' transferable skills and knowledge that will be of benefit in the digital workplace or in future study.

17. Programme learning outcomes

Knowledge and understanding:

Students achieving the PG Certificate, PG Diploma and MA awards should be able to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of:

K1	systematic knowledge of advanced level debates about digital society;
K2	the most important social challenges posed by digital developments;
K3	the main theoretical frameworks which are at the forefront of analysis of digital society;
K4	contemporary digital research methods and issues in researching in a digital age;
K5	a range of epistemological and ontological positions relevant to social research and the implications of these for research design, conduct and analysis.

In addition, students achieving the award of Masters should be able to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of:

K6	the processes required to engage in focused, sustained and original independent inquiry through the production of a supervised dissertation.
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Skills and other attributes:

Students achieving the PG Certificate, PG Diploma and MA awards should be able to:

S1	undertake bibliographic and social data searches, including the use of computer-based techniques;
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	manage and maintain records of their searches and other research-related data;
S2	design a research study and provide a rationale for that design informed by theoretical and methodological concerns;
S3	demonstrate autonomy and originality in applying a range of data collection and analysis methods with an emphasis on those appropriate for digital society research;
S4	use digital methods to answer specific research questions;
S5	communicate clearly through written and oral means, to a range of audiences;
S6	work effectively and sensitively, both independently and with others;
S7	produce digital media artefacts appropriate to specific social/use contexts.
In addition, students achieving the award of Masters should be able to:	
S8	demonstrate originality in the application and development of their knowledge and skills in the production of a dissertation, or in the exchange of knowledge and skills between the worlds of formal study and digital media work.

18. Teaching, learning and assessment

Development of the learning outcomes is promoted through the following teaching and learning methods:

1. **Lectures** are used to disseminate information to students on substantive issues and concerns (K1-K5).
2. **Seminars / Workshops** are used throughout the programme. These are important learning environments for allowing students to explore and discuss their ideas, and so develop understanding and skills (K1-K5 & S1-S6).
3. **Computer lab sessions** enable students to learn and put into practice a wide range of research techniques (for example of data collection and analysis) as well as develop bibliographic skills (K4 & S1-S4, S7).
4. **Set tasks** (for example presentations to peers and other audiences) enable students to work through complex areas in a structured way. Opportunities to demonstrate communication skills are provided through a range of means including small-group presentation sessions (K1-K5 & S1-S7).
5. **Independent study** is essential to the successful completion of the programme, both in taught modules and in the end of programme dissertation (K1-K6 & S1-S6).
6. **Internship** opportunity in the dissertation will allow students undertake knowledge and skills exchange and to reflect on that process (S8).
7. **One-to-one supervision** is provided for students when undertaking their dissertations. These sessions are arranged between student and supervisor, and it is here that the intellectual and methodological issues of the dissertation are discussed, and where students get help and support in planning their work (K6 & S8).

Opportunities to demonstrate achievement of the learning outcomes are provided through the following assessment methods:

Students are assessed in a variety of ways in order to test a range of knowledge, skills and capabilities through modes of assessment appropriate to the specific subject. The modes of assessment include:

1. **Essays** – designed to test subject knowledge (K1-K5) and skills (S1, S3, S5).
2. **Critical review of digital media products and platforms** – designed to test subject knowledge (K2, K6) and skills (S5-S7).
3. **Presentations** – designed to test subject knowledge (K1-K6), as well as organisational, communicative and interpersonal skills (S1-S6).
4. **Independent research projects** - designed to test methods knowledge and skills (K4, K5 & S1-S6).
5. **Digital media products** – designed to test knowledge of digital developments and ability to produce digital media products appropriate to specific social contexts (K2, S7).
6. **Internship portfolio** – designed to test reflexivity on the process of knowledge and skills exchanges between the formal study environment and the employment environment (K2, S5, S6, S7).

7. **Dissertation** – testing student subject knowledge (K1-K6) and skills (S1-S8).

19. Reference points

The learning outcomes have been developed to reflect the following points of reference:

Quality Assurance Agency (2014) UK Quality Code for Higher Education. Part A: Setting and Maintaining Academic Standards. The Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications of UK Degree-Awarding Bodies.

The University Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy 2011-16 <http://www.shef.ac.uk/lets/strategy/lts>

The University's Strategic Plan <http://www.shef.ac.uk/strategicplan/mvi>

Departmental Research Agenda (Research Clusters)

Postgraduate Proposition (Departmental)

20. Programme structure and regulations

The programme has three elements:

- (1) It has a set of core modules which cover the foundational theoretical and methodological concepts and approaches and practical approaches in digital society developments, research and practice.
- (2) It has a set of specialist elective modules on topics related to digital media that reflect some of the most pressing digital society concerns and current research and expertise in the Department of Sociological Studies.
- (3) The programme culminates in the dissertation module which provides the opportunity, under one-to-one supervision, to focus in depth on a topic of individual choice, which can include an element of internship or practice.

Thus, students are required to undertake core modules to a value of 60 credits, optional modules to a value of 60 credits and a dissertation module (60 credits). The 60 credits of options are taken from a list of units relevant to the core concerns of the programme offered by the Department of Sociological Studies and other departments in the faculty. The list of available option units may vary from year to year.

The taught element of the programme takes place from September to May and is examined by continuous assessment, as outlined above. The rest of the year (June to September) is devoted to the production of the dissertation.

Students who take this programme part-time will have a period of two years to complete. The part-time route is structured in the following way: students will take 90 credits in the first year and the remaining 90 credits in the second year. The dissertation which is worth 60 credits must be taken in the second year. Part-time students have access to all of the resources and support that is available to full-time students, such as library, online resources, ICT and language support, mentoring, students' union, teaching committee, sociology society. For any specific issues relating to part-time study, students are encouraged to consult with their personal tutors or programme managers.

There is a dissertation with internship option. In collaboration with the Postgraduate Internship Opportunities Team, the Department of Sociological Studies will support students in deciding whether that dissertation option is suited to their academic and professional needs, and for those who take up that option, sessions will be provided pre- and post-internship focused on facilitating critical reflection on their skill and learning development in a workplace environment. The assessment for the Dissertation with Internship is a 5000-7000-word Internship Portfolio consisting of a report and a log of activities undertaken while on internship. It will be the responsibility of students to locate and negotiate an internship, but in collaboration with the Postgraduate Internship Opportunities Team. The Department will provide support on the process and make students aware of funding sources to facilitate an internship such as the Postgraduate Advantage Scheme and Erasmus+. It would be possible for students not taking the Dissertation with Internship option to also take advantage of work-experience opportunities facilitated by the Faculty for PGT students. Opportunities provided through the Global Learning Opportunities in the Social Sciences Scheme, such as the Global Leadership Initiative, may also give students on the programme further opportunities to develop employability skills.

Detailed information about the structure of programmes, regulations concerning assessment and progression and descriptions of individual modules are published in the University Calendar available on-line at

<http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/calendar/regs>

21. Student development over the course of study

A pass mark of 50 or greater must be achieved in order to gain credits for each module.

A student who has been awarded 120 credits in the taught modules and has successfully completed the dissertation shall be eligible for the award of MA Digital Media and Society.

If a student has been awarded 120 credits and/or does not successfully complete the dissertation, they shall be eligible for a Postgraduate Diploma in Digital Media and Society.

A student who has been awarded 60 credits in the taught elements (i.e. non-dissertation) shall be eligible for the award of Postgraduate Certificate in Digital Media and Society.

22. Criteria for admission to the programme

2.1 degree (or equivalent) in a relevant discipline. However, if applicants have relevant work experience with good academic potential they may also be considered.

IELTS 6.5 (with no less than 6.0 in each component) or equivalent.

23. Additional information

Full information about the programme is available on the department's web site:

<http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/socstudies>

This specification represents a concise statement about the main features of the programme and should be considered alongside other sources of information provided by the teaching department(s) and the University. In addition to programme specific information, further information about studying at The University of Sheffield can be accessed via our Student Services web site at <http://www.shf.ac.uk/ssid>.