



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	Sociology
2	Programme Code	SPRT008
3	JACS Code	L300
4	Level of Study	Postgraduate
5a	Final Qualification	Master of Arts (MA)
5b	QAA FHEQ Level	Masters
6a	Intermediate Qualification(s)	Postgraduate Certificate in Sociology (PGCert) Postgraduate Diploma in Sociology (PGDip)
6b	QAA FHEQ Level	Masters
7	Teaching Institution (if not Sheffield)	Not applicable
8	Faculty	Social Sciences
9	Department	Sociological Studies
10	Other Departments involved in teaching the programme	Other departments may be involved in that they may offer optional modules which the Programme Manager deems appropriate for the MA. The list of options that other departments make available may vary, and so the list of departments contributing will vary annually.
11	Mode(s) of Attendance	Full-time or Part-time
12	Duration of the Programme	1 year Full-time, 2 years Part-time
13	Accrediting Professional or Statutory Body	None
14	Date of production/revision	October 2018, August 2018, March 2026

15. Background to the programme and subject area

It has never been more important to understand and analyse current problems facing the world from a sociological perspective. The MA in Sociology aims to extend and develop students' knowledge of core areas of sociological scholarship and research methods. It offers students opportunities to systematically immerse themselves in established and emergent ideas in the discipline as well as opportunities to engage in debates about the most pressing sociological challenges in the social world. The MA Sociology is aimed at individuals who want to think systematically about the social world, the key changes currently taking place within it, and what those changes mean for societies in the future. The sociological analysis of contemporary social life, social relations, and social concerns at local and global, micro and macro levels lies at the centre of the programme. The MA provides an excellent background for further study in Sociology and other Social Science based subjects. The theoretical and methodological foundations of the MA all provide a sound basis from which to develop PhD research. The MA in Sociology also forms an excellent starting point for careers in many non-academic arenas. The combined focus on theory and research skills along with an exploration of contemporary social problems and their potential solutions offer key transferable skills for the labour market. The programme aims to extend students' methodological knowledge and enhance students' social research capacities to conduct research work at an advanced level.

The programme has three elements. It has a set of core modules, which cover the theoretical and methodological concepts and approaches in sociology, as well a focus on emergent sociological agendas and contemporary social questions. It has a set of elective modules on substantive sociological topics that reflect current research and expertise in the Department of Sociological Studies. The programme culminates in the dissertation module, which provides the opportunity, under one-to-one supervision, to investigate in depth a topic of individual choice.

The programme is delivered by a team of academics who have robust research expertise and publications track records and are recognised as leaders in their fields in Sociology. They ensure that the MA experience is informed by current debates on emergent and enduring sociological topics. The programme is designed to

encourage and enable students' active engagement in their own learning - to become part of our academic community, to participate in debates, to develop a reflexive disposition and to mature as researchers.

The programme has been structured to assist in developing a broad range of cognitive, communication and transferable skills that will be of use in later life. These include skills related to gathering and analysing data, synthesising and assessing material, developing logically consistent, reasoned and structured arguments, communicating clearly and effectively in written and oral forms, using information technology, and learning to work independently as well as to collaborate with others to attain common objectives.

16. Programme aims

The MA Sociology aims:

1. to enable student engagement in advanced level debates in established and emerging fields of sociological enquiry;
2. to develop advanced and in-depth knowledge of the foundational theoretical concepts, ideas and approaches in sociology;
3. to generate awareness of the most significant and innovative empirical areas of research in sociology;
4. to foster an understanding of the role of applied sociology and the relevance of sociology in the public realm;
5. to provide advanced training in social science research methods, with an emphasis on their application to investigating contemporary sociological debates and social questions;
6. to equip students with the skills required to undertake independent social scientific research at an advanced level;
7. to foster transferable and employment-related skills.

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	advanced level debates in contemporary sociological enquiry;
K2	core and emergent theoretical concepts, ideas and approaches in sociology;
K3	Long standing and contemporary empirical areas of research in sociology;
K4	a range of epistemological and ontological positions relevant to sociological research and the implications of these for research design, conduct and analysis;
K5	the contribution which social and sociological analysis can make to society;
K6	theoretical and practical debates in two or more subfields of sociological studies.

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

K7	necessary to engage in focused and sustained independent inquiry through the production of a supervised dissertation.
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Skills and other attributes:

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

S1	undertake bibliographic searches, including the use of computer-based techniques; 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	relate the main theoretical and empirical concerns within sociology to contemporary social relations;
S4	demonstrate competence in applying a range of data collection and analysis methods;
S5	demonstrate awareness of the social and political context of sociological work and the role of sociology in the public domain;

S6	communicate clearly through written and oral means, to a range of audiences;
S7	work effectively and sensitively both independently and with others.
In addition, students achieving the award of Masters should be able to:	
S8	demonstrate originality in the application of their knowledge and skills in the production of a dissertation.

18. Teaching, learning and assessment

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

- (a) **Lectures** are used to disseminate information to students on substantive issues and concerns.
- (b) **Seminars / Workshops** are used throughout the programme. These are important for allowing students to explore and discuss their ideas, and so develop understanding.
- (c) **Computing laboratory sessions** enable students to learn and put into practice a wide range of quantitative and qualitative research techniques of data collection and analysis as well as develop bibliographic skills.
- (d) **Set tasks** 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.
- (e) **Independent study** is essential to the successful completion of the programme, both in taught modules and in the end of programme dissertation.
- (f) **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.

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:

- Essays – designed to test subject knowledge (K1-K6) and skills (S1-S7).
- Critical case-study reviews and reports – designed to test subject knowledge (K1-K6) and skills (S1-S7).
- Oral and written presentations, and group work – designed to test subject knowledge (K1-K6), as well as organisational, communicative and interpersonal skills (S6 & S7).
- Dissertation – testing student subject knowledge (K1-K7) and skills (S1-S8).

19. Reference points

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

Quality Assurance Agency (QAA): Postgraduate research programme Code of Practice, National Framework for Qualifications - Masters Level Descriptors.

Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) Postgraduate Training Guidelines, 3rd Edition, 2001, General and subject-specific guidelines; Framework for methods training; cross-disciplinary research training; length of training; assessment of research skills.

University of Sheffield Graduate Attributes

20. Programme structure and regulations

The programme has three elements:

- (1) It has a set of core two-semester modules which cover the core theoretical and methodological concepts and approaches in sociology, as well a key focus on major contemporary social relations, questions and identities.
- (2) It has a set of specialist elective modules on substantive sociological topics that reflect 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.

Thus, students are required to undertake 2 core modules, one research methods module, three optional modules and a dissertation. The three optional units, to the value of 45 credits, are chosen from a range of modules offered by the Department of Sociological Studies. The list of available modules 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.

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 candidate who has been awarded 120 credits in the taught modules and has successfully completed the dissertation shall be eligible for the award of MA in Sociology. If a candidate has been awarded 120 credits and/or does not successfully complete the dissertation, they shall be eligible for a Postgraduate Diploma in Sociology. A candidate who has been awarded *sixty* credits in elements (1) or (2) above shall be eligible for the award of Postgraduate Certificate in Sociology.

22. Criteria for admission to the programme

Detailed information regarding admission to programmes is available from the University's On-Line Prospectus at <http://www.shef.ac.uk/courses/>.

23. Additional information

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.shef.ac.uk/ssid>.