

Programme Specification



The
University
Of
Sheffield.

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 with Social Policy
2	Programme Code	SPRU009
3	HECoS Code	100502
4	Level of Study	Undergraduate
5a	Final Qualification	Bachelor of Arts with Honours (BA Hons)
5b	QAA FHEQ Level	6
6	Intermediate Qualifications	None
7	Teaching Institution (if not Sheffield)	Not applicable
8	Faculty	Social Sciences
9	School	Sociological Studies, Politics and International Relations
10	Other Schools involved in teaching the programme	None
11	Mode of Attendance	Full-time
12	Duration of the Programme	3 years
13	Accrediting Professional or Statutory Body	None
14	Date of production/revision	September 2024, March 2026

15. Background to the programme and subject area

The social sciences developed in the mid-nineteenth century, out of the need to understand a social world that was changing rapidly under the impact of industrialisation, urbanisation, migration and population growth. In the twenty-first century, the world appears to be changing even more rapidly. Sociology's dynamic character is based on a recognition that such change is intrinsic to social life, with sociologists studying the social processes driving change. From the local to the global, sociological concerns focus on challenges facing societies as humans engage with each other and the physical and natural worlds. Sociology is a core social science discipline that offers a distinctive social perspective to understanding human life.

A sociological perspective emphasises the need to understand how individual attitudes, beliefs and life chances are socially patterned and how people's personal experiences and private troubles are related to wider structural forces and social processes. It is therefore concerned with understanding relationships between individuals, groups and social structures and the diverse and unequal character of these. As well as exploring the processes underpinning social change, sociologists consider how cultures are created and give meaning to individual actions and beliefs. Sociologists employ a range of data sources, research strategies and methods of data collection and analysis to investigate the social world. Through doing so, they make a unique contribution to social change.

A single honours degree with 75% Sociology and 25% Social Policy fosters a perspective which emphasises the need to understand the distribution and delivery of resources in response to social needs, preferences and expectations. It focuses on cultural and structural issues, including policy making and different welfare systems. Many of the individual modules that make up the degree address key concerns of both social policy and sociology.

The single honours degree in Sociology with Social Policy thrives on the unique structure of the Department of Sociological Studies, which has a long history of integrated research and teaching in these two disciplines (in addition to social work and digital society) This multidisciplinary is a significant strength and, over many years, has provided us with a solid foundation for consistently innovative, high-quality teaching and research. The Department has a long-standing commitment to developing knowledge to address inequalities and promote new understandings supporting social change for the better. It has an international reputation as a leading UK social science department in recognition of our world-class research at the forefront of critical sociology.

For further background information on the programme please visit the Department of Sociological Studies webpage: <http://www.shef.ac.uk/socstudies>.

16. Programme aims

The Department of Sociological Studies provides a high-quality learning environment with the aim of delivering:

- a comprehensive, research-informed curriculum based on the expertise of academic staff.
- active learning environments, including in inclusive personalised digital spaces.
- a skills focused programme, including academic and research skills freedom and the advancement of knowledge.
- a programme that fosters respect for the traditions of Higher Education, including open enquiry, intellectual.

The curriculum supports students to become critical sociologists who:

- identify and analyse social problems and challenges, such as conflicts, divisions, inequalities, and crises.
- develop an imagination for a transformed world as well as the creativity to conceptualise solutions to social problems and envisage paths to social change through, for example, impactful, transformative research, solidarity, or activism.
- sustain a critical awareness of social problems but also hope for the possibility of a better world.
- cultivate an international outlook on the social world.
- reflect on, and understand, their own personal involvement in the problems facing the world and their own potential agency in its transformation.

The degree in Sociology with Social Policy aims to:

1. Develop students' critical understanding of the different conceptual, theoretical and methodological approaches to sociology and social policy.
2. Advance students' knowledge of contemporary societies, and expand their capacity to critically engage with social, political and economic conditions and relations.
3. Equip students with the methodological skills to collect, analyse and present data using a wide range of research methodologies.
4. Enable students to develop and reflect on their own values, experiences and aspirations in relation to sociology and social policy.
5. Engage students in applied learning, including opportunities to conduct research, develop professional skills and interact with professionals, organisations and communities.
6. Enhance students' employability by providing opportunities to reflect on and develop self-confidence, self-awareness and self-belief.
7. Equip students with transferable skills in critical and strategic thinking, communication, leadership, collaborative practice and digital literacy.

17. Programme learning outcomes

By the end of your degree, you will be equipped with a wide range of skills, methodological competencies and theoretical knowledge to engage with and critically evaluate the subject matter of Sociology and Social Policy. You will have demonstrated, through a research project of your own, that you can contribute to the production of new insights into the social world for the disciplines. Progression through the degree is an apprenticeship, at the end of which you will be able to demonstrate that you are a critical sociologist who can apply your sociological imagination to understand, interpret and communicate about the social world.

Knowledge and understanding of:	
K1	The development of sociological and social policy ideas regarding relationships between individuals, groups and social institutions, political and economic conditions and the processes underpinning social change.
K2	The diversity of conceptual, theoretical and methodological approaches to sociology and social policy.
K3	The nature and affordances of diverse research strategies and how to deploy them appropriately to understand the social world and policy processes as well as how to explore the relationship between sociological argument and evidence.
K4	Social problems, social divisions and social inequality, and approaches to policy making and analysis, and the role of welfare institutions intended to address them.
K5	The (inter)disciplinary character of sociological and knowledge, and the importance of values and ethics in sociological practice.
K6	The applications and uses of sociological knowledge across a variety of contexts, including public, private, national and global.

Skills and other attributes:	
S1	Design, implement, evaluate and report research using appropriate qualitative and quantitative methods and undertake policy analysis.
S2	Synthesise and communicate complex ideas, arguments and research findings in ways suitable for diverse specialist and non-specialist audiences using a variety of communicative styles and media.
S3	Demonstrate the professional values and skills of engaged and critically thoughtful citizens, including sensitivity to the values and interests of others, working respectfully across differences, and understanding the importance of diversity and the relevance of context.
S4	Reflect upon, identify and articulate personal skills and attributes, and opportunities for continual critical learning, development and reflection.
S5	Work collaboratively to bring together different perspectives to analyse and contribute to sociological and policy debates and ideas.
S6	Demonstrate digital literacy through the use of information and digital technologies to find, evaluate, create and communicate knowledge, and the capacity to adapt to developing technologies.

18. Teaching, learning and assessment

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

- Lectures** are a major teaching method in most modules at all Levels of the degree and are used to disseminate information to students on substantive issues and concerns (K1 – K6).
- Seminars** are used throughout the programme and are important learning environments in which students explore and discuss issues in depth. Seminars are designed to develop understanding and skills (K1 – K6 & S1 – S5).
- Collaborative student-led groups** are an integral part of core Level 1 and Level 2 modules and some optional modules at all Levels of the degree (K1 – K6 & S5).
- Interactive workshops** are used at Level 2 and Level 3 to deliver collaborative, enquiry-based learning. Students are taught in smaller groups to encourage greater engagement, cohesion and responsibility for their own learning (K1 – K6 & S1 - S5).
- Independent study** is essential to the successful completion of the programme, both in taught modules and the dissertation (K1 – K6 & S1 – S4 and S6).
- One to one supervision** is provided for students undertaking the dissertation, and module convenors provide optional one to one supervision to provide advice and support, including on assessment preparation and reading (K1-K6 & S1 – S4).
- Academic tutoring** includes timetabled sessions in which tutors support students' academic progress and development throughout the programme. Tutoring reinforces all knowledge and skills outcomes (K1 – K6 & S1 – S6).

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

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

- **Essays** - designed to test subject knowledge (K1 – K6) and skills (S1 - S3 and S6).
- **Reports on set tasks** - designed to test subject knowledge (K1 – K6) and skills (S1 – S4 and S6).
- **Presentations and group work** - designed to test subject knowledge (K1 – K6) and skills (S3 - S6).
- **Critical reviews of literature and scholarly debates** – designed to test subject knowledge (K1 - K6) and skills (S1 - S3 and S6).
- **Examinations** - designed to test subject knowledge (K1 – K6) and skills (S1 - S3).
- **Digital internet research** – designed to test subject knowledge (K1 - K6) and information searching and processing skills (S6).
- **Independent research projects** - designed to test subject knowledge (K1 – K6) and skills (S-4 and S6).
- **Dissertation** - an independent research project and a key element in the assessment of the programme learning outcomes (K1 - K6 and S1 - S4 and S6).

19. Reference points

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

Subject Benchmark Statements

<https://www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code/subject-benchmark-statements>

Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (2024)

<https://www.qaa.ac.uk/the-quality-code/qualifications-frameworks#>

University Vision and Strategic Plan

<https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/vision>

Education Strategy Delivery Plan

<https://staff.sheffield.ac.uk/vision/education>

Department of Sociological Studies 5-year Action Plan

A comprehensive review of the sociology curriculum, including consultations with staff and students, competitor analysis of Sociology and Social Policy programmes at competitor universities, Faculty of Social Sciences NSS Data 22/23 and TellUS Module and Programme Feedback 22/23.

20. Programme structure and regulations

The curriculum is designed to promote the depth of understanding progressively over the three years of undergraduate study. Teaching is closely linked to the specialist research interests of academic staff.

Level 1 - At Level 1, students are required to take 100 credits within the Department of Sociological Studies, the other 20 credits being taken either within the Department or via an unrestricted module. All modules are 20 credits.

Level 2 and Level 3 - At both Levels 2 and 3, students are required to take, at least, 100 credits within the Department of Sociological Studies, the other 20 credits being taken either within the Department or via an unrestricted module. In practice, most students choose to take all their credits within the Department. All modules are 20 credits, except for the 40-credit dissertation. There are four core modules at Level 2 (80 credits) and the dissertation is the only core module at Level 3.

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>

21. Student development over the course of study

Progression through the programme is informed by three principles:

- **Acquisition of key skills and knowledge** - at the appropriate level.
- **Student choice** – students are supported in taking responsibility for shaping their degree programme and developing their own intellectual and substantive paths via a combination of compulsory and optional modules.
- **Subject specialisation** – students can increase their knowledge and skills in specific areas of interest by choosing related optional modules.

Level 1 is designed to provide a common foundation of theoretical, empirical and methodological knowledge appropriate for students who are either familiar or unfamiliar with the discipline. It also provides a foundation of core skills and attributes. **Level 2** builds on this foundation to further develop key knowledge and skills. It also provides an opportunity for students to select optional modules that align with their developing interests. **Level 3** provides higher level knowledge and skills and enables students to explore their interests further. Students select from a wide range of research-focused optional modules and the dissertation provides the opportunity to carry out a substantial piece of research on a topic of their choosing.

A pass mark of 40 or greater must be achieved to gain credits for each module.

A student who has been awarded 360 credits shall be eligible for the award of BA Hons Sociology with Social Policy.

22. Criteria for admission to the programme

Detailed information regarding admission to the programme is available at:

<https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/undergraduate/apply/requirements>

23. Additional information

Full information about the programme is available on the department's website: <http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/socstudies>. The Department also hosts a Sociology Society (SocSoc) run by and for students. The Society aims to provide a welcoming, accessible and inclusive environment for all students. It organises social and other events and provides academic support and charity work and volunteering opportunities. More information is available at: <https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/socstudies/socsoc>

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 the University web site at <https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/undergraduate>