



## 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**

<b>1</b>	<b>Programme Title</b>	Applied Social Science
<b>2</b>	<b>Programme Code(s)</b>	SMIU02 BA Applied Social Sciences SMIU04 BA Applied Social Sciences with Human Geography SMIU05 BA Applied Social Sciences with Sociology SMIU06 BA Applied Social Sciences with Social Policy SMIU07 BA Applied Social Sciences with Politics SMIU08 BA Applied Social Sciences with Criminology SMIU10 BA Applied Social Sciences with Education, Culture and Childhood
<b>3</b>	<b>JACS Code</b>	L990, F890, L790, L310, L490, L329, L311, X390, P500
<b>4</b>	<b>Level of Study</b>	Undergraduate
<b>5a</b>	<b>Final Qualification</b>	Bachelor of Arts with Honours (BA Hons)
<b>5b</b>	<b>QAA FHEQ Level</b>	6
<b>6</b>	<b>Intermediate Qualifications</b>	Certificate in Applied Social Sciences
<b>7</b>	<b>Teaching Institution (if not Sheffield)</b>	Not applicable
<b>8</b>	<b>Faculty</b>	Social Sciences
<b>9</b>	<b>Department</b>	The Sheffield Methods Institute
<b>10</b>	<b>Other Departments involved in teaching the programme</b>	Education Geography Law Politics Sociological Studies Urban Studies and Planning Journalism
<b>11</b>	<b>Mode of Attendance</b>	Full-time
<b>12</b>	<b>Duration of the Programme</b>	3 years
<b>13</b>	<b>Accrediting Professional or Statutory Body</b>	None
<b>14</b>	<b>Date of production/revision</b>	March 2019, February 2022, January 2024

### 15. Background to the programme and subject area

The social sciences are an inter-related set of disciplines and subjects that attempt to explore, understand and explain the social world in which we all live, work and play. Originally developed in the mid-nineteenth century as a new way to investigate society, the social sciences emerged from the need to understand a world that was changing rapidly. Industrialisation, urbanisation, migration and population growth transformed the here-and-now of everyday experience and brought previously unseen opportunities and challenges to all those who lived in society. The social sciences provided a new way to study these changes and, in some cases, to shape those changes for the benefit of all.

At the beginning of the twenty first century, the world continues to transform with a pace previously unseen. In a social milieu of unprecedented technological advancement, growing ecological pressure, and ever more complex global inter-connections, the opportunities and challenges that face all members of society remain as paramount as they were in the 19th Century - and the inter-disciplinary nature of the social sciences are now ever more vital to our understanding of the human situation.

Indeed, with an over-arching remit that encourages creativity and innovation, an inter-disciplinary social science is perfectly placed to look beyond old horizons and respond to the emerging challenges and opportunities of an ever-more inter-connected social world.

The 'Applied Social Sciences' programme is structured around three key strands. The first strand focuses on the development of knowledge of theories and concepts within social science and the disciplines that constitute it. In doing so, the programme provides an opportunity for students to develop an interdisciplinary understanding of some of the key global issues facing us today. Within a structured programme of work that has inquiry-based learning at

the heart of it, students are able to shape their programme to their own interests by choosing to study two to three social science subjects in detail at L1, majoring in one subject pathway and minoring in another at L2, and focussing on their chosen single disciplinary pathway at L3.

The degree also includes an employability strand, which offers students a range of opportunities to build their skills and knowledge in relation to future careers and study opportunities. An optional placement at L2 provides students with first-hand experience of meeting the demands of external organisations, a theme which is also embedded across other modules. Reflecting the civic origins of the University of Sheffield, L1 students will engage with live project work with community-based clients, and at L3, students will develop the skills necessary to carry them forward into the world of work.

In the third strand of the degree, students develop their research skills through a series of modules in which both quantitative and qualitative methodologies are addressed. This strand involves opportunities to present at an annual student conference and to undertake an extended study as a dissertation, focused in an area related to their major subject.

At L1, all students will be initially enrolled on SMIU02: BA Applied Social Science. Upon successful completion of L1, and following their pathway choice, students will be (re)enrolled onto the course that corresponds with their chosen pathway (SMIU04, SMIU05, SMIU06, SMIU07, SMIU08, SMIU10).

Students will be based in the Sheffield Methods Institute (SMI) which draws together research methods training across the Faculty and provide a catalyst for interdisciplinary research in the social sciences. Whilst teaching will take place across the SMI and the departments offering the students' choice of major and minor subjects, personal tutors will be SMI staff and will be available for individual support throughout the programme.

For further background information on the programme please visit the Sheffield Methods Institute webpage: [www.sheffield.ac.uk/smi](http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/smi)

## 16. Programme aims

The programme's aims are to deliver:

- An interdisciplinary curriculum that includes a study of competing conceptual and theoretical perspectives in two or three social science disciplines, with a major focus on one of these disciplines.
- Innovation in teaching through active learning strategies, including group work, student projects, a placement and computer-based learning.
- Research and skills-focused programme design and teaching.

With a commitment to:

- The participation of students from diverse backgrounds.
- Engendering a culture of student self-improvement and the development of life and vocationally relevant skills, thus facilitating a full contribution to the society in which they live and work.
- Fostering respect for the traditions of Higher Education, including open enquiry, intellectual freedom and the advancement of knowledge.

The degree aims to:

1. Foster knowledge and critical understanding of theoretical, methodological and conceptual issues in two or three social science disciplines, with a major focus on one of these disciplines.
2. Enable students to understand contemporary social processes and social change from an interdisciplinary perspective.
3. Develop skills in logical thinking and foster a capacity for independent, critical judgement.
4. Provide students with the tools to effectively acquire, select and communicate ideas and information.
5. Equip students with a range of transferable intellectual and practical skills that prepare them to enter employment or postgraduate studies.
6. Equip students with the skills to gather evidence and marshal arguments in a logical and clear fashion.
7. Equip students with the skills to collect, analyse and present data using a variety of quantitative and qualitative research methodologies.

## 17. Programme learning outcomes

By the end of your degree with us we will have equipped you with interdisciplinary skills, methodological competencies and a theoretical awareness to engage and critically evaluate demonstrate through a research project of your own, that you can contribute to the production of new knowledge for the discipline you have chosen as your major subject. Progression through the degree is therefore an apprenticeship, at the end of which you will be able to demonstrate that you can put your knowledge of the social sciences into practice in order to understand, interpret and communicate your own view of the world.

Knowledge and understanding of:	
<b>K1</b>	The key conceptual and theoretical perspectives in two or three social science disciplines, with a major focus on one of these disciplines.
<b>K2</b>	The value and importance of interdisciplinary analysis to a greater understanding of society.
<b>K3</b>	The nature and appropriate use of diverse research strategies and methods in gaining social science knowledge; the relationship between argument and evidence in the social sciences.
<b>K4</b>	The key concepts and theoretical and methodological approaches in the major discipline studied.
<b>K5</b>	The distinctive character of social science in relation to other forms of understanding, such as its focus on society, human interaction and the human relationship to the environment.

Skills and other attributes:	
<b>S1</b>	General, cognitive and transferable: problem solving; making reasoned arguments; interpreting evidence and texts; written and oral communication skills in a variety of contexts; presentation skills; time planning; interpersonal and teamwork skills.
<b>S2</b>	Social inquiry, information technology and research: gathering, retrieving and synthesising information; identifying and appraising a range of research strategies and methods; conducting empirical research; statistical and other quantitative techniques at a preliminary level.
<b>S3</b>	Evaluative and analytical: judging and evaluating evidence; formulating informed questions; competence in using major social science theoretical perspectives and applying them in relevant contexts; analysing, assessing and communicating empirical information; undertaking and presenting scholarly work.
<b>S4</b>	Moral sensitivity: appreciating the complexity and diversity of social situations; assessing the merits of competing theories and explanations; understanding the ethical implications of social science enquiry.
<b>S5</b>	Reflective: developing the ability to reflect upon their own accumulation of knowledge; recognising the relevance of social science knowledge to policy and everyday life.

## 18. Teaching, learning and assessment

Development of the learning outcomes is promoted through the following teaching and learning methods:
<p><b>1. Lectures</b> are a major teaching method in most modules at Levels 1 and 2 of the degree (K1 – K5, S1 – S4).</p> <p><b>2. Seminars</b> are used throughout the programme to reinforce knowledge gained from lectures and to explore relevant issues in depth. In addition, in some modules, students are expected to both prepare and contribute to seminars. Seminars thus contribute both to the achievement of knowledge and understanding (K1 – K5) and to the development of key skills (S1 – S5).</p> <p><b>3. Student-led groups</b> are an integral part of some modules (S1).</p> <p><b>4. Interactive workshops</b> are used to move away from more traditional teaching methods of delivering teaching, to more interactive, enquiry-based learning. Students are also taught in smaller groups to encourage greater student engagement, cohesion and responsibility for their own learning (S1, S2, S5).</p> <p><b>5. Independent study</b> is essential to the successful completion of the programme. The amount of independent study broadly expected for each module is set out in the course information, although it is recognised that this will vary from student to student. Independent study is generally geared towards the assimilation and further clarification of material gleaned from lectures, preparation for seminars, preparation for written assessments, and the broader development of knowledge of the field of study. Supervised independent study for the Dissertation is a core element of Level 3 of the degree. Independent study thus contributes to the development of all the programme learning outcomes, S1 – S5.</p> <p><b>6. One to one supervision</b> in the form of structured individual, peer and group tutorials are provided for all students across L1 of their degree programme. This will enable them to be fully supported with respect to their decisions concerning the major/minor 'path' of their degree. One to one supervision is also provided for all students undertaking the Dissertation. These sessions are arranged between student and supervisor and it is here that the</p>

intellectual and methodological issues of independent study are discussed, and where students get help and support in planning and undertaking their project.

**7. Open-access surgeries** are optional timetabled sessions, available for discussion of academic questions and problems, advice on essays, discussion of reading and so on. These sessions reinforce all knowledge and understanding outcomes (K1 – K5) and while supportive of all skills outcomes are particularly relevant to S3 and S5.

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

Innovations in teaching have been accompanied by novel assessment forms. Assessment methods used across the range of modules at all Levels include:

- Written examinations designed to test subject knowledge (K1 – K5).
- Essays, project work and research reports designed to test subject knowledge, to increase autonomy in student learning, and to develop transferable skills (K1 – K5 and S1 – S5).
- Oral presentations and group work (including peer assessment) designed to test organisational, communicative and interpersonal skills (S1 – S5).
- Portfolio of learning achieved on placement (S1, S3, S5).
- The Level 3 dissertation is a substantial report of 15,000 words and is assessed on its application of research skills, their interpretation of existing literature and its organisational coherence. The Dissertation is a key element in the assessment of all the programme learning outcomes, but particularly K4 and S3.

## **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 (2014)

<https://www.qaa.ac.uk/docs/qaa/quality-code/qualifications-frameworks.pdf>

University Vision and Strategic Plan

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

## **20. Programme structure and regulations**

### **Programme Regulations**

At L1, all students will be initially enrolled on 'SMIU02: BA Applied Social Sciences' and complete the requisite modules listed under the SMIU02 programme code. Upon successful completion of L1, and following their pathway choice, students will be (re)enrolled onto the course that corresponds with their chosen pathway.

A student will select a pathway from the following list and follow the regulations for level 2 and level 3 listed under the designated programme code:

- |       |        |  |
|-------|--------|--|
| (i)   | SMIU04 | BA Applied Social Sciences with Human Geography                  |
| (ii)  | SMIU05 | BA Applied Social Sciences with Sociology                        |
| (iii) | SMIU06 | BA Applied Social Sciences with Social Policy                    |
| (iv)  | SMIU07 | BA Applied Social Sciences with Politics                         |
| (v)   | SMIU08 | BA Applied Social Sciences with Criminology                      |
| (vi)  | SMIU10 | BA Applied Social Sciences with Education, Childhood and Culture |

### **Programme Structure**

The curriculum is structured around three strands: (i) interdisciplinary study in the social sciences (ii) research methods (iii) employability. The curriculum is designed to progressively promote the depth of understanding over the three years of undergraduate study. Teaching, especially at Level 3, is closely linked to the research interests of staff.

#### **Level 1**

At Level 1 students are required to take 40 credits in the research strand and between 60 and 80 credits in the social science subject strands - students can choose modules from 2-3 social science disciplines - the other 20 credits being from guided module choice. These guided credits will also allow students to develop, or consolidate, their

language skills as part of their degree programme. At the end of L1 students will select their chosen pathway for L2 and L3.

### **Level 2**

At Level 2, students undertake 40 credits in a minor social science subject and 40 credits in their major subject pathway. They have the option to undertake a 20 credit placement as part of the employability strand, and study 40 credits in the research methods strand, including inquiry-based quantitative and qualitative modules (20 credits each), and also engage in the Faculty's annual student conference. As a non-credit bearing option, students will also be offered the additional opportunity of developing, or consolidating, their language skills via the University of Sheffield's 'Languages for all' gateway.

### **Level 3**

At Level 3, students undertake 40 credits in the major subject and complete a 20-credit module in mixed methods research through an enquiry-based learning approach. By designing and completing their own projects, students will learn how to apply mixed methods and appreciate the value of bringing together both qualitative and quantitative approaches in conducting research. Students will develop their ability to collect, analyse, and present MMR data, alongside critically reflecting process of using MMR. Level 3 students are required to take a 40 credit *Dissertation*. The employability strand is built upon in work undertaken as part of SMI303 Research Dissemination in Social Sciences. They also present at the annual student conference as part of a 20-credit module in the research methods strand. Again, students can choose to develop, or consolidate, their language skills via the University's 'Languages for all' gateway.

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**

The curriculum is designed to allow students progressively to achieve the specified learning outcomes. Coherence and a balance between breadth and depth of study are promoted by a combination of compulsory and optional modules. Progression through the programme structure is informed by three principles:

- Subject specialisation – students can increase their knowledge, understanding and skills in specific areas of interest, by identifying a major and minor subject of study.
- Student choice – students are supported in taking responsibility for shaping their degree programme and constructing intellectual and substantive pathways through available modules.
- The Acquisition of key skills (in writing, researching and presenting ideas) and knowledge (of key concepts, theories and disciplinary approaches) at the appropriate level.

Level 1 is designed to provide a common foundation of theoretical, empirical and methodological work that is appropriate for students who are familiar or unfamiliar with social science concepts and methods. Level 2 builds on this foundation to further develop key skills in theoretical analysis and research methods. It also provides ample opportunity for students to select optional modules to reflect their burgeoning interests and expertise in society. Level 3 enables students to explore their interests and strengths further by providing higher level core skills and the opportunity to carry out a substantial piece of research on a topic of their choosing in their major discipline.

## **22. Criteria for admission to the programme**

Detailed information regarding admission to the programme is available at <http://www.shef.ac.uk/prospective/>

## **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>.