



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	Politics and Sociology
2	Programme Code	SPRU002 / POLU02
3	HECoS Code	100491, 100505
4	Level of Study	Undergraduate
5a	Final Qualification	Bachelor of Arts with Honours (BA Hons)
5b	QAA FHEQ Level	6
6a	Intermediate Qualification(s)	None
6b	QAA FHEQ Level	None
7	Teaching Institution (if not Sheffield)	Not applicable
8	Faculty	Social Sciences
9	School	Sociological Studies, Politics and International Relations
10	Other Schools providing credit bearing modules for the programme	None
11	Mode(s) of Attendance	Full-time
12	Duration of the Programme	3 years
13	Accrediting Professional or Statutory Body	Not applicable
14	Date of production/revision	March 2013 / February 2018 / February 2021 / February 2024

15. Background to the programme and subject area

The dual degree programmes involve the parallel study of two major disciplines in complementary fields, offering students a broad context for their intellectual development. Dual degrees offer students the flexibility to choose a programme of study that reflects their interests and gives the opportunity to develop detailed knowledge and key skills in two major subjects. Whilst the two subjects may be taught independently, they will complement, inform and illuminate one another.

The study of politics involves the development of knowledge and understanding about governance in human societies. Politics is concerned with ideas, institutions and practices from the local and regional levels to the national and international domains. Issues such as power, democracy, and rights are central to its pre-occupations. Politics graduates are equipped to pursue a variety of careers in the public, private and voluntary sectors. At Sheffield, the politics curriculum is structured around different strands of the discipline including, for example, the study of governance, public policy, political theory, international relations and political economy. Teaching is organised to provide a challenging learning environment that reflects the research interests and expertise of staff.

A sociological perspective emphasises the need to understand how individual attitudes, beliefs, life chances, and actions are socially patterned and how people's personal experiences and private troubles are related to wider structural forces and social processes. At Sheffield, the sociology curriculum is concerned with investigating social relationships, such as those between individuals and groups, social structures, and the diverse and unequal character of these. It involves exploring how sociologists employ a range of data sources, research strategies, methods of data collection, and analytical approaches to examine the social world.

The Department of Politics and International Relations at Sheffield has gained an international reputation as one of the top Politics research departments in Britain, ranked in the top ten for research excellence in the most recent (2021) Research Excellence Framework. In terms of teaching the department was awarded a maximum 24 points in the last Quality Assurance Agency Subject Review. Many prominent scholars in the field of Politics and International Relations have been members of staff and a number of leading figures in the discipline currently work in the Department. Further information on programmes can be found on the Department's website at <http://www.shef.ac.uk/politics>.

The Department of Sociological Studies is distinctive within the United Kingdom in combining excellence in Sociology, Social Policy, Social Work, and Digital Society. For further background information on the

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

16. Programme aims

1. to produce graduates with broad knowledge and understanding of political and social phenomena, and of the concepts, theories, approaches and methods employed in the study of politics and sociology.
2. to enable students to evaluate different interpretations of political and social processes, interactions, events and controversies, and to critically assess issues of contemporary public concern.
3. to enable students to develop a range of important intellectual, practical and key skills.
4. to develop skills in logical thinking and foster a capacity for independent, critical judgement.
5. to provide students with the tools to effectively acquire, select and communicate ideas and information.
6. to prepare graduates for employment in a wide range of contexts, or for continued studies.
7. to impart understanding of how the daily lives of individuals, and the long-term patterns of social structure and social policies are each intertwined with the other.

17. Programme learning outcomes

Knowledge and understanding: By the end of the programme students will be able to demonstrate:	
K1	broad-based knowledge and understanding of political ideas, institutions and practices, and specialised knowledge and understanding of specific areas in political and sociological studies.
K2	the ability to apply a range of concepts, approaches and methods to analyse political and social phenomena.
K3	the ability to evaluate critically differing interpretations of political and social processes, events, and debates.
K4	the ability to appreciate and assess issues of contemporary political and social concern.
K5	the relationships between individuals, groups and social and political institutions; the role of culture in social life; the social processes underpinning social change.
K6	understanding of: social context; the nature of social processes; social diversity, social divisions, social problems and inequality.
K7	the value and importance of comparative analysis to a greater understanding of politics and society.

Skills and other attributes:

S1	collect data and information from a variety of sources including printed and electronic media.
S2	understand and interpret qualitative and basic quantitative data.
S3	organise and synthesise information, arguments, and evidence.
S4	analyse issues, construct reasoned arguments, solve problems, and exercise critical judgement.
S5	manage learning effectively, including self-assessment and the constructive use of feedback.
S6	conduct an extended, self-directed, investigation of a specific issue (including project design and investigation followed by analysis and interpretation and concluding in the presentation of the findings).
S7	communicate information and ideas effectively in both oral and written forms.
S8	work independently, demonstrating responsibility, initiative, foresight and the capacity to manage time.
S9	collaborate effectively with others to achieve common goals.
S10	use information and communications technologies to retrieve and present information and analyse data.
S11	undertake self-directed learning to develop further knowledge and skills.
S12	identify and appraise a range of research strategies and methods.

18. Teaching, learning and assessment

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

K1-7 are acquired in a variety of teaching and learning environments including lectures, seminars, small group interactions, and project/dissertation work. Specialised knowledge and understanding of specific areas (K1) is particularly acquired through Level 3 seminars and project/dissertation work. For all such learning outcomes (**K1-7**) considerable emphasis is placed on individual study – on reading and note taking, exploring printed and electronic sources, reflecting on material, and preparation. Assessment (see below) forms an integral part of the learning process, with essays, projects and other course work designed to focus the learner's attention on critical issues, and feedback provided to allow the learner to further improve their performance. The balance among teaching methods varies as the programme progresses. Lectures play a significant role at Levels 1 and 2, and a support role at Level 3. Seminars and small group interactions are important at all Levels. Individual supervision of self-directed learning projects and dissertations is central to Level 3 (Year 4 for this programme).

Lectures and seminars provide guidance and a framework to assist the progressive acquisition of **skills and other attributes S1-12**. Seminars, group work and class assignments provide a context to practice these skills, receive feedback from peers and staff, and gain confidence and proficiency. Modules across the curriculum promote cumulative learning of intellectual and practical skills S1, 3, 4 and 5, as well as an appreciation of the variety of methods and research strategies (S12). Explicit instruction in particular skills is provided by the compulsory Level 1 module 'Political Analysis 1: An Introduction to Research and Scholarship', (S1, 2 qualitative, 5), and the compulsory Level 2 module 'Political Analysis 2: How to do Empirical Research' (S1, 2 quantitative, 3).

The numerical dimension of S2 may be further developed at Level 3 (in special subject, project or dissertation modules) depending upon the student's choice. Acquisition of S6 is ensured through Level 3 project and dissertation modules, but these modules also allow students to develop further their capacities to collect and interpret data (S1 and 2), organise and synthesise information (S3), and to extend their analytical and problem-solving skills (S4), and their capacity to manage their learning (S5).

Promotion of specific skills occurs in different combinations across the curriculum at all Levels. Preparation for, participation in, and feedback from, seminars provide a context for developing capacities for oral communication (S7 oral), independent working (S8), and self-directed learning (S11). Preparation of, and feedback from, written assignments provide a context for developing skills of written communication (S7 written), independent working (S8), and self-directed learning (S11). Explicit guidance on essay writing (S7 written) is provided in the Level 1 'Political Analysis'. Use of information and communications technologies to retrieve, present and analyse data (S10) is dealt with in 'Political Analysis' modules at Levels 1 and 2. All modules require students to display their capacities to undertake self-directed learning (S11), with the Level 3 project and dissertation modules particularly extending this capacity to the fullest extent.

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

Knowledge and understanding (K1-7) are assessed in a variety of methods appropriate to the specific material. Most modules involve both essays and unseen examinations. Some require the preparation of short written assignments (for example, book reviews or briefing reports), oral presentations and group exercises. Marks on project modules are determined on the basis of the written submissions. Formative assessment is provided in seminars, and structured feedback is provided on all written and oral forms of assessment for which marks are awarded.

Assessment of skills and other attributes (S1-12) is closely linked to that of knowledge and understanding. Written comments returned after graded work provide feedback on the range and use of sources (S1 and 2), the structure and quality of analysis and argument (S9 and 10), as well as on the methods used (S12). Feedback on S6 is provided by project and dissertation supervisors. Students preparing dissertations also receive peer assessment of an oral presentation made at a dissertation workshop. Assessment of skills is integrated with the evaluation of course work at all Levels of the programme. S7 and S8 are assessed through seminar participation and the successful and timely completion of oral and written course work. The capacity to use information and communications technologies (S10) is demonstrated through assignments across the curriculum with the 'analyse data' element explicitly assessed on Level 2 'Political Analysis 2: How to do Empirical Research'. S11 is not assessed independently, but demonstrated by student attainment on the programme, especially in the preparation of Level 3 projects and dissertations.

19. Reference points

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

Internal:

The Sheffield Graduate Attributes

<https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/sheffieldgraduate/studentattributes>

University Vision and Strategic Plan

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

Departmental research interests

External:

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#>

20. Programme structure and regulations

The curriculum enables students to develop both broad-based knowledge and more specialised engagement with specific topics. It is designed to progressively promote the depth of understanding over the four years of undergraduate study. Teaching, especially during the final year of study, is closely linked to the research interests of staff, and all students are required to complete a project/dissertation, enabling them to actively engage with the research process. Some modules and/or types of modules are compulsory at each level, but substantial choice is built into the programme to enable students (in consultation with staff) to devise a programme of study tailored to their individual needs and interests.

A specialised understanding of specific topics is ensured by the requirement in the final year of study for students to take either a dissertation module or prepare a project closely linked to one of the specialist subject modules.

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

The curriculum is designed to allow students progressively to achieve the specified learning outcomes. Compulsory modules and/or types of modules at each level have been structured to enable students to extend systematically their knowledge and skills. Section 20 above (Programme structure and regulations) highlights key concentrations of study at each of the levels.

Year 1 provides a foundation of theoretical empirical and methodological work appropriate for students engaging with political and sociological concepts. It also encourages reflection on the complexity of political life, introducing the approaches required for its comprehension, and developing a range of skills to assist with independent learning.

Year 2 develops a solid core of student understanding, allowing students to extend their knowledge and skills base. It also provides ample opportunity for students to select optional modules to reflect their burgeoning interests and expertise in politics and society.

Year 3 enables students to explore their interests and strengths further by providing higher level core skills and allowing students to select from a wide range of research-focused optional modules. It also offers students the opportunity to engage in independent learning through researching and writing an extended piece of work under individual supervision.

Coherence, a balance between breadth and depth of study, staged progression over the period of study, and flexibility and choice, are promoted by a combination of compulsory and option modules. At all times, advice is available to help students choose coherent programmes of individual study.

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/prospective/>

23. Additional information

Please refer to the Politics and Sociological Studies Departmental web pages at <https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/politics> and <https://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.shef.ac.uk/ssid>.