	PROGRAMME SPECIFICATION	Newcastle University

1	**Awarding Institution**	Newcastle University
2	**Teaching Institution**	Newcastle University
3	**Final Award**	MA
4	**Programme Title**	Sociology and Social Research
5	**Programme Code**	4027 F/P
6	**Programme Accreditation**	N/A
7	**QAA Subject Benchmark(s)**	N/A
8	**FHEQ Level**	Level 7
9	**Last updated**	July 2021

10	**Programme Aims**

1. To meet the aims of the ESRC's postgraduate training guidelines by providing high quality research training at Master's level.
2. To provide learning opportunities to enable graduates to acquire the knowledge and understanding, skills and aptitudes necessary to undertake advanced research in the social sciences in general and sociology in particular
3. To contribute to the University's objectives by providing high quality research training to an increasing number of postgraduates and enhancing their key skills and employability
4. To produce graduates who are capable of successfully undertaking and completing advanced research projects
5. To produce employable graduates who can proceed to careers in research in Universities, the public sector, or the private sector
6. To provide a qualification which fully meets the learning outcomes at level 7 in the national qualifications framework
7. To provide a programme that conforms to University policies and to QAA Framework for Higher Education Qualification

11	**Learning Outcomes**

The programme provides opportunities for students to develop and demonstrate knowledge and understanding, qualities, skills and other attributes in the following areas. The programme outcomes have references to the benchmark statements for Sociology.

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Knowledge and Understanding

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On completing the programme students should show:

A   Knowledge and Understanding in Sociology

A1   appreciation of the theoretical traditions and concepts that influence and shape sociology as a discipline and the implications (both practical and methodological) of such theories for research

A2   awareness and understanding of the variety of philosophical principles and epistemological frameworks that underpin approaches to social inquiry

A3   understanding of the way in which social divisions (including gender, class, race, ethnicity, sexuality and disability) are generated as structures of power and patterns of inequality; how

these are reproduced and transformed over time; and how they shape and impact social policy

A4   understanding and appreciation of the profound transformations in contemporary political, social, cultural and economic institutions and practices, and the implications of this restructuring for institutional change, collective and individual agency, and lived experience

A5   knowledge of the value and efficacy of comparative research within and between societies

Teaching and Learning Methods

Theoretical traditions and concepts within sociology (A1) will be explored through lectures, group exercises, and student presentations in various modules and through independent reading and one-to-one tutoring. An enhanced understanding of the epistemological and philosophical bases of social inquiry (A2) will be developed through the lectures, group workshops and student presentations in the compulsory sociology modules An improved awareness of the importance of social divisions and social change, and the benefits of comparative research within the social sciences (A3-A5), will be developed through the lectures, group exercises, and student presentations in sociology modules, and through independent reading and one-to-one tutoring. All of the sociological skills (A1-A5) will be enhanced by the student's dissertation project. The department also offers a yearly seminar programme, featuring talks from staff and guest speakers (including many renowned scholars), and students are encouraged to attend to improve their knowledge of the discipline.

Assessment Strategy

All of the skills (A1-A5) will be assessed through written essays and the dissertation.

Intellectual Skills

On completing the programme students should:

B Training in Research Methods

B1   Principles

(i)   be able to define and formulate research problems and questions and hypotheses
(ii)   understand the rationale for research methods, appreciate the value for sociological research of the range of methods and sources available, be able to evaluate and select appropriate methods, and be properly critical and reflexive about these choices
(iii)   show knowledge and understanding of the social and political context of research activity and its uses
(iv)   show understanding of qualitative research in the social sciences, including an examination of the range of available methods such as participant observation, ethnographic fieldwork and interviewing and an exploration of the ethical principles, implications and dilemmas of qualitative research
(v)   understand sampling, sampling error, and biases in results
(vi)   understand and be able to apply concepts of generalisability, validity, reliability and replicability

B2   Data collection and analysis

(i)   a knowledge and understanding of the application of selected methods of data collection
(ii)   a knowledge and understanding of the wide range of data sources available for research in social policy, including archival and historical data, survey and qualitative data, longitudinal studies, and material drawn from the mass media.
(iii)   an understanding of strengths and weaknesses of different types of data and the development of a critical use of sources

(iv)	an understanding of the use of methods and tools to analyse data, including techniques for analysing qualitative data (as an example discourse analysis or event analysis) and multivariate analysis (such as multiple regression and log linear models)
(v)	proficiency in both qualitative and quantitative data analysis

Teaching and Learning Methods

Teaching strategy

B1 (i) and (ii) will be delivered through the research and dissertation preparation modules. B1 (iii-v) will be delivered through the modules on qualitative and quantitative research methods.

The teaching strategy for B1 (i) and (ii) is a combination of lectures, workshops and both discipline specific and multi-disciplinary teamwork. Students learn through preparation of a dissertation and team-based problem solving exercises. Teaching for B1 (iii) and (iv) will be through lectures and group discussions. Teaching for B2 (i - v) will be delivered through the modules on qualitative and quantitative research methods modules. The teaching strategy for B2 (i - v) is a combination of lectures, workshops and data analysis practicals.

Learning strategy

For B1 (i - v) students will learn through completing assignments and practical exercises. For B2 (i - v) students will learn by completing assignments, practical exercises and in the writing of their dissertations.

Assessment Strategy

For B1 (i - v) will be teamwork assessment, practical assessments and a c.2,500 word written report. Assessment strategy for B2 (i - iv) will be a combination of data analysis practicals and c.2,500 word reports and evaluation of the dissertation.

Practical Skills

On completing the programme students should show:

C   General Research skills

C1   Bibliographic and computing skills:

(i)	the skills to identify and obtain relevant materials relating to research, including annals, books, journals, theses, conference proceedings, and resources available electronically and on the WWW
(ii)	the skills to maintain a personal research bibliography and use EndNote
(iii)	IT skills, including word processing and other basic computing skills including spreadsheets and database management, SPSS and NUDIST

C2   Language skills

(vii)	where appropriate, the acquisition of the language skills necessary to enable research in, or pertaining to, a non-English speaking country, to be undertaken

C3   Ethical issues

(i)	a knowledge and understanding of matters relating to privacy and confidentiality in research
(ii)	an awareness of the political context of research
(iii)	an awareness of professional codes of practice
(iv)	a knowledge and understanding of the power relations inherent in research fieldwork
(v)	an awareness of the ethical responsibilities that a researcher has towards the researched

Teaching and Learning Methods

Teaching strategy

Bibliographic and computer skills are taught through workshops and practical classes. Ethical issues are taught by lectures and workshops.

Learning strategy

Students learn bibliographical skills (C1 (i - ii) by developing an initial bibliography for their dissertation. Students acquire knowledge of ethical issues through team work, presentations, case studies and independent reading.

Assessment Strategy

General research skills will be assessed by means of unseen written exams and coursework. Both employ a range of approaches in order to accurately assess student abilities. The assessment for the information skills module will be constructing a bibliography, incorporating bibliographic search strategies and professional design and layout. IT skills will be assessed by the bibliographic exercise and data practical assessment. Ethical issues will be assessed by a combination of team work assessment and c.3,000 word written reports.

Transferable/Key Skills

On completing the programme students should show:

D   Key Skills

D1   the skills to communicate and present research findings effectively to specialist and non-specialist audiences

D2   the skills of effective written communication and presentation

D3   the skills to manage research, including writing proposals, planning the research project, and implementation on time

D4   the ability to work independently, with initiative, and to work effectively as a member of both subject-specific and multi-disciplinary teams

Teaching and Learning Methods

Teaching strategy

D1, D3 and D4 are taught through teamwork and individual presentations which provide opportunities to cooperate, develop ideas, improve problem-solving capacity and work to deadlines. D2 is taught through a range of iterative written assessments.

Learning strategy

Students acquire the key skills through active participation in large and small multidisciplinary and discipline-specific groups. The dissertation project provides specific opportunities of skill development through the construction of a research plan, through synthesizing knowledge and by participating in dissertation workshops and individual meetings with supervisors.

Assessment Strategy

Key skills are not independently assessed. However, effective written communication (D2) is indirectly assessed by coursework in the form of written essays, D3 is indirectly evaluated through fulfilment of module requirements in a timely manner, and D4 will be evaluated through student team presentations in various modules. All key skills (D1-D4) are assessed by the process of the dissertation.

12	Programme Curriculum, Structure and Features
Basic structure of the programme	

One year full time or two years part time
180 credits (120 coursework, 60 dissertation)
170 credits compulsory (2x20 credits modules, 7x10 credits modules and 1 x 60 credit dissertation) 10 optional credits.

Key features of the programme (including what makes the programme distinctive)

- An appreciation of the theoretical traditions and concepts that influence and shape sociology as a discipline and the implications (both practical and methodological) of such theories for research;
- An awareness and understanding of the variety of philosophical principles and epistemological frameworks that underpin approaches to social inquiry;
- An understanding of the way in which social divisions are generated as structures of power and patterns of inequality;
- An understanding of the profound transformations in contemporary political, social, cultural and economic institutions and practices, and the implications of this restructuring for institutional change, collective and individual agency, and lived experience;
- The ability to conceptualise, design, undertake and write up a piece of original research in the form of a dissertation.

Programme regulations (link to on-line version)

[4027 Programme Regulations 21-22](#)

13	Support for Student Learning

Generic information regarding University provision is available at the following link.

https://www.ncl.ac.uk/ltds/assets/documents/qsh_progspec_generic_info.pdf

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14	Methods for evaluating and improving the quality and standards of teaching and learning

Generic information regarding University provision is available at the following link.

https://www.ncl.ac.uk/ltds/assets/documents/qsh_progspec_generic_info.pdf

Accreditation reports
N/A

Additional mechanisms
N/A

15	Regulation of assessment

Generic information regarding University provision is available at the following link.

https://www.ncl.ac.uk/ltds/assets/documents/qsh_progspec_generic_info.pdf

In addition, information relating to the programme is provided in: The University Prospectus: http://www.ncl.ac.uk/postgraduate/ Degree Programme and University Regulations: http://www.ncl.ac.uk/regulations/docs/ The Degree Programme Handbook

Please note. This specification provides a concise summary of the main features of the programme and of the learning outcomes that a typical student might reasonably be expected to achieve if she/he takes full advantage of the learning opportunities provided. The accuracy of the information contained is reviewed by the University and may be checked by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education.