

PROGRAMME SPECIFICATION (Undergraduate)



1 Awarding Institution	Newcastle University
2 Teaching Institution	Newcastle University
3 Final Award	BA (Honours)
4 Programme Title	Sociology Sociology (with placement year)
5 UCAS/Programme Code	L300 1492U
6 Programme Accreditation	Not applicable
7 QAA Subject Benchmark(s)	Sociology
8 FHEQ Level	Level 6
9 Date written/revised	July 2021

10 Programme Aims

1. To enable students to gain a firm grounding in the essentials of sociology, including sociological concepts, theories, methodologies, and applications.
2. To enable students to study a range of self-chosen specialisms within the subject and to undertake a research project.
3. To offer an environment informed by research and scholarship in which students can learn about sociology from knowledgeable staff, their own study and from discussion with fellow students.
4. To enhance students' cognitive skills, including analysing and presenting information and developing a reasoned argument; and core skills such as adaptability, planning and organisation.
5. To produce graduates who are capable of following a wide variety of careers in the private, voluntary, statutory, and professional services sectors, of undertaking postgraduate courses in the subject and/or pursuing life-long learning.
6. To provide an award which meets the requirements at Level 6 in the Framework for Higher Education Qualification and which meets the requirements of the relevant national subject benchmarks.
7. To conform to University policies about quality assurance and QAA Codes of Practice.

For Students on the Placement Year

8. Provide students with the experience of seeking and securing a position with an employer.
9. Facilitate independent self-management and proactive interaction in a non-university setting.
10. Provide a period of practical work experience that will benefit current academic study and longer term career plans.
11. Enable students to ethically apply their knowledge and skills in the work place, reflect upon their development and effectively evidence and articulate their learning in relevant future settings.

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.

Knowledge and Understanding

On completing the programme students should be able:

- A1 To identify, understand and analyse some of the major social scientific approaches to studying the social world and to understand their relevance to social, public and civic policy issues.
- A2 To use sociological perspectives and concepts to understand and analyse aspects of social life at local, national and global levels.
- A3 To understand the distinctive character of sociology in relation to other forms of understanding, such as its relation to other disciplines and to lay explanation.
- A4 To have an understanding of the complexity of human behaviour, and a recognition of social context, social diversity and inequalities and their impact on the experiences of individuals and groups.
- A5 To identify and understand a range of classical and contemporary sociological bodies of explanation.

For Students on the Placement Year

- A6 Apply personal and professional development strategies to prioritise, plan, and manage their own skills development and learning.
- A7 Research, select and apply relevant knowledge aimed at enhancing their own skills and effectiveness in specific duties at their placement.
- A8 Demonstrate an understanding of a work environment, how it functions and their contribution to it.
- A9 Relate their work based learning to other areas of personal development, including academic performance.

Teaching and Learning Methods

The primary method for imparting knowledge is lectures (A1-A5). These are supplemented by seminars, workshops and student-centred group work, computer-assisted learning, film sessions and fieldtrips (A2). Students are also encouraged to develop knowledge through independent and guided reading which draws imaginatively on a range of source material (primarily journal articles, monographs, and edited volumes, but also conference papers, Internet postings, research programme briefs, and research work in progress) (A3-A5). To enhance understanding of the relationship between research and the production of sociological knowledge (A2), the curriculum draws on current and contemporary Subject Area research publications.

Assessment Strategy

Knowledge and understanding (A1-A5) are assessed by means of written examination and coursework. Both employ a range of approaches in order to accurately assess and grade student abilities. These include:

- ❖ Seen examinations
- ❖ Unseen examinations
- ❖ Synopsis
- ❖ Essays
- ❖ Portfolio work
- ❖ Dissertation proposal
- ❖ Dissertation

Examinations and synopsises allow assessment of surface understanding of important areas of knowledge, and essays, portfolios and the dissertation assess students' depth of knowledge and understanding. The dissertation proposal, and the dissertation itself, assess students' ability to apply their theoretical and methodological knowledge to a substantive area of work.

Intellectual Skills

On completing the programme students should be able:

- B1 To think logically and critically about social problems, including having the ability to apply theoretical knowledge to the understanding and assessment of empirical, practical and policy issues.

B2	To gather, synthesise and evaluate the significance and validity of information and evidence from a wide variety of sources.
B3	To marshal, construct and propose reasoned, coherent and structured arguments, drawing upon appropriate sociological and allied sources of evidence.
B4	To be critically reflexive of their own and others' production of knowledge, engagement with theory and use of evidence.

Teaching and Learning Methods

Intellectual skills of logical and critical thinking (B1), as well as skills in gathering, synthesising and evaluating information and data (B2) are introduced and developed in compulsory and optional modules across all stages of the degree programme. Modules, prominent methodology elements in particular, encourage the development of specific intellectual skills in data production / collection, management and analysis (B2). Other modules encourage students to construct and propose reasoned and structured arguments via individual and group presentations, case study analysis and seminar discussions (B3, B4). All cognitive skills (B1-B4) are exercised significantly during the course of a final year dissertation, the completion of which is supported by a workshop and individual and group tutorials. Attendance at the Subject Area Seminar Programme provides additional opportunities to develop and demonstrate critical and reflexive sociological understanding (B4).

Assessment Strategy

Intellectual skills (B1-B4) are assessed by means of written examination and coursework. Both employ a range of approaches in order to accurately assess and grade student abilities. These include:

- ❖ Seen examinations
- ❖ Unseen examinations
- ❖ Essay
- ❖ Portfolio
- ❖ Project
- ❖ Problem-solving exercises
- ❖ Dissertation

All types of assessment allow students to show their ability to work through empirical and conceptual problems in a number of ways and provide evidence of their development of argumentation and evaluation skills.

Practical Skills (subject-specific)

On completing the programme students should be able:

C1	To develop the ability to identify the nature and appropriateness of different research strategies and methods, and assess their relative contributions to the production of sociological knowledge.
C2	To formulate and investigate sociologically informed questions, and to understand and evaluate the appropriateness and validity of a range of research approaches for investigating different social issues and policy problems, including a recognition of the ethical dimension to social research.
C3	To critically analyse, assess and communicate empirical sociological evidence.
C4	To recognize the usefulness of social scientific theory and evidence for the evaluation of specific social problems, issues and events.
C5	To make assessments of the merits of competing explanations and perspectives.

Teaching and Learning Methods

Understanding and experience of the principal approaches to social research (C1) are provided in lectures, seminars, workshops and practicals in a series of compulsory modules spanning all stages of the degree programme, these compulsory modules progressively build on each other. In each stage, students' research skills are further developed through seminars, workshops and individual tutorials which encourage the identification of the contribution of research to the production of

sociological knowledge (C2-C3). Through group discussion, problem-solving exercises, presentations, portfolio and project work, students develop a series of subject skills through application (C2-C3), and develop a critical appreciation of the contribution to and application of this knowledge to substantive areas of sociological concern (C3-C5).

Assessment Strategy

Subject-specific skills (C1-C5) are assessed by means of written examination and coursework. Both employ a range of approaches in order to accurately assess and grade student abilities.

These include:

- ❖ Portfolio
- ❖ Project
- ❖ Oral presentation (individual and group-based)
- ❖ Problem-solving exercises
- ❖ Dissertation

Portfolios, projects and oral presentations allow assessment of the varied application of ideas to particular research problems and situations. The dissertation is the culmination in the development of such skills and allows students to show the range of subject-specific skills they have accumulated through the development of their own research question and investigation.

Transferable/Key Skills

On completing the programme students should be able:

- D1 To communicate effectively, clearly and concisely, in a variety of modes (eg: written and oral), and in a variety of contexts (ie. different audiences).
- D2 To learn, study and work in an organised, time-efficient and self-directed manner and to identify those factors which facilitate the individual learning process.
- D3 To work collaboratively as part of a team to plan tasks, make decisions, collate and co-ordinate information, organise practical action and propose solutions to problems posed.
- D4 To be conversant with and competent in information technology and its uses and applications.
- D5 To acquire basic numeracy skills.

For Students on the Placement Year

- D6 Reflect on and manage own learning and development within the workplace.
- D7 Use existing and new knowledge to enhance personal performance in a workplace environment, evaluate the impact and communicate this process.
- D8 Use graduate skills in a professional manner in a workplace environment, evaluate the impact and communicate the personal development that has taken place.

Teaching and Learning Methods

Key skills are formally taught from Stage One, and across all stages of the degree programme students are encouraged to develop and practise skills in essay and report writing, and oral presentation (D1); in accessing library, bibliographic and Internet resources (D4); in time-management and independent learning (D2); and in team-working, decision-making, problem-solving and organising practical action (D3). Students are introduced to all key skills in the compulsory Study Skills module (known as Doing Sociology) in Stage One, and develop and refine them in compulsory and optional modules to Stage Three. Advanced key skills (in communication, IT, library research, team-working, time-management and independent study) are developed in selected compulsory modules at Stage Two and Three through coursework, seminar, workshop and dissertation preparation and practical group exercises (D1-D5).

Assessment Strategy

Key skills (D1 – D5) are assessed by a variety of means which include:

- ❖ Seen examinations
- ❖ Unseen examinations
- ❖ Individual and group oral presentation
- ❖ Portfolios
- ❖ Problem-solving exercises

❖ Dissertation

Exams assess students' ability to plan their work and produce quality materials within specific time restrictions. Presentations allow for assessment of students' abilities to communicate and to work effectively together. Problem-solving exercises used on modules on social research methods test advanced key skills and numeracy in particular. Portfolio assessments require students to work self-directed, solve problems, be organised and work efficiently. The dissertation requires students to plan and carry out a large piece of work that requires significant levels of coordination and organisation.

12 Programme Curriculum, Structure and Features

Basic structure of the programme

Programme Features

The programme is studied over three years full-time based on 30 weeks attendance per annum. Each year or stage requires the study of modules with a credit value of 120. A 20 credit module consists of 200 hours of student effort, covering lectures, small group teaching, independent study, completion of coursework and revision for examination. The majority of modules are weighted at 20 credits, only the dissertation in Stage Three is worth 40 credits.

Stage One provides a foundation in the discipline of sociology, while introducing students to ideas within associated social science disciplines, in particular anthropology. The emphasis is on developing students' ability to describe and discuss differing theories of the social world, and begin to demonstrate how theoretical knowledge can be used to understand empirical, practical and policy issues. Stage One also enables students to gain a preliminary understanding of the way that sociological questions about the social world are generated; to gain awareness of the major theoretical perspectives and concepts in sociology and of main methodological techniques, and have rudimentary skills in their application to specific social issues; and to develop an understanding of the principles and practices of communicating sociological knowledge.

Stage One requires students to take 100 credits of compulsory modules in sociology, covering a range of themes within understanding society, exploring cultures historically and comparatively and introducing students to social theory and methodological approaches. Two modules in particular are designed to introduce students to a) the fundamental themes and approaches of sociology (The Sociological Imagination) and b) to conceptual and methodological concerns of sociology (Knowing in Sociology). Students may select 20 credits of options in either Sociology or in other disciplines such as modern languages, law, psychology and the natural sciences. Options taken outside the Faculty of Humanities and Arts and Social Sciences are subject to approval from the Degree Programme Director and timetabling synergies.

Stage Two focuses on the main disciplinary area of sociology. At this stage, the emphasis is on deepening students' ability to undertake scholarly sociological work through empirical and library-based research, and on deepening their understanding of the key concepts and theoretical approaches that have been developed and are developing in sociology. The stage marks a progression from the introduction to methodological and conceptual sociological fundamental themes towards the development of a deeper and more critical engagement with the discipline (primarily through the 60 credits of compulsory modules). Stage Two students are required to take 60 credits of compulsory modules on researching social life and understanding social change and transformation along with 60 credits of options. Students can choose to develop their knowledge and understanding of anthropology by selecting from Stage Two modules (subject to availability). Students can also choose to develop their studies in other disciplines up to the value of 20 credits, subject to the approval of the Degree Programme Director and timetabling synergies.

Whatever their combination of module choices, Stage Two students are expected to gain a recognition of social context, social diversity and inequalities and their impact on the experiences and opportunities of individuals and groups; to recognise the impact of power and culture on social relationships and be able to glean sociological knowledge to understand relationships in specific contexts; to develop an understanding of social structural change; to understand the ethical implications of sociological inquiry; to have an understanding of the different methodological approaches in sociology and their appropriateness to specific research questions, and to recognise

the relevance of sociological knowledge to social, public and civil policy at local, national and global levels of analysis.

In Stage Three, students are able to consolidate their disciplinary expertise and subject-specific skills, as well as expand their opportunities to develop the skills integral to autonomous and life-long learning. The first objective is achieved through the provision of a range of specialist modules, which students may select to the value of 80 credits. The second objective is met through the 40 credit compulsory dissertation which gives students the chance to embark upon an extended, self-initiated study of their own choosing and their own design. The dissertation reflects the culmination of students' programme of study, and allows the demonstration of specialist interest, subject-specific skills (most especially research and analytical skills), cognitive and key transferable skills. The structure of Stage Three, with its dual emphasis on specialisation and choice, enables students to select modules according to their academic interests and their aspirations in relation to both post-graduate study and career paths. The opportunities for both choice and specialisation in Stage Three are the important dynamic behind the production of high quality student work. In stage 3 the students also have the opportunity to take a 40 credit Study Abroad module, normally in semester 1, which involves their closely monitored and evaluated attendance at an University in Europe or abroad taking modules in sociology and working on their dissertation. The scheme is closely managed to ensure the appropriateness of the modules students take while abroad and the translation of marks obtained into our assessment methods and calculations.

Students on a Placement Year Programme will be on the placement year between Stage 2 and 3 of their programme.

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

(a) details of study abroad or industrial placements

Student can opt to take one 40 credit module (normally semester 1 of Stage 3) on Student Exchange.

(b) any innovative features of the programme

The programme brings together theoretical and empirical inquiry through our range of specially designated modules. The dissertation module is structured around group and individual supervision meetings, preparation for which begins at Stage 2. This module is supported by a staff-led workshops on specific issues. The compulsory dissertation enables students to work with these (theoretical and empirical) concepts in an extended piece of self-directed work.

The programme is also unusual in offering a range of anthropological perspectives, included in compulsory and optional modules throughout all 3 stages.

Programme regulations (link to on-line version)

[L300 Programme Regulations 23-24](#)

13 Support for Student Learning

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

Generic Information

Academic and Pastoral Support

All students are assigned personal tutors*. A personal tutor is one part of a wider network of advice and guidance available to students to support their personal and general academic development. Students follow a structured timetable of meetings with their Personal Tutor, with whom they discuss marks and feedback on their work, and generic progress issues. Details of the Universities personal tutor system can be found at

https://www.ncl.ac.uk/ltds/assets/documents/Personal_Tutor_Framework_2018-19.pdf

The module leader acts as the first point of contact for subject-specific academic advice. Thereafter the Degree Programme Director or Head of School (Sociology) may be consulted. Issues relating to the programme may be raised at the Student Voice Committee, and/or at the Board of Studies.

Within the academic unit, students may also receive additional academic and pastoral advice from a range of other student-facing staff including degree programme directors, dissertation/project supervisors, and administrative support staff.

*Arrangements may vary for students taking special types of provision.

Students of all three Stages hold initial group meetings with their personal tutors during the induction programme. Through these meetings students are introduced to their module choices, clarify timetable concerns and general information. During these meetings, Stage One students receive and are introduced to their Study Skills Handbook (more detail below). Induction at Stage 1 includes two meetings during the first month. This helps students settle into the University environment, develop good academic work practices, and develop their social network. All Stage 1 students are also assigned a Peer Mentor who is a Stage 2 or 3 Sociology student and who looks after a small group (4-5) of mentees. Induction and peer mentoring provides a framework of support during the transition to university life.

Stage Two students are assigned to their prospective dissertation supervisors during Semester Two and have one group meeting and two individual meeting with supervisors at this stage. During Stage Three, they meet with their supervisors, both in a group (4 times) and individually (5 times) throughout the year. In addition, Stage Three students are provided with an introduction on taught postgraduate study and doctoral research,

The University also offers a wide range of institutional services and support upon which students can call, such as the Writing Development Centre, Careers Service and Student Wellbeing Service. This includes one-to-one counselling and guidance or group sessions / workshops on a range of topics, such as emotional issues e.g. stress and anxiety, student finance and budgeting, disability matters etc. There is specialist support available for students with dyslexia and mental health issues. Furthermore, the Student Union operates a Student Advice Centre, which can provide advocacy and support to students on a range of topics including housing, debt, legal issues etc

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.

[Generic Information](#)

Accreditation reports

N/A

Additional mechanisms

N/A

15 Regulation of assessment

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

[Generic Information](#)

In addition, information relating to the programme is provided in:

The University Prospectus: <http://www.ncl.ac.uk/undergraduate/degrees/#subject>

The University Regulations (see <http://www.ncl.ac.uk/regulations/docs/>)

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.