

**PROGRAMME SPECIFICATION
(Undergraduate)**



1	Awarding Institution	Newcastle University
2	Teaching Institution	Newcastle University
3	Final Award	BA (Honours)
4	Programme Title	Politics and Sociology Politics and Sociology (with Placement Year)
5	UCAS/Programme Code	LL32 1464U 1824U
6	Programme Accreditation	N/A
7	QAA Subject Benchmark(s)	Sociology Politics
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 and politics including key concepts, theories, methodologies, and applications.
2. To enable students to study a range of self-chosen specialisms within these subjects and to undertake a dissertation or equivalent research-based module.
3. To offer an environment informed by research and scholarship in which students can learn about sociology and politics 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 and/or of undertaking postgraduate courses in either 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 Undertaking a 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 QAA Subject Benchmark Statements for both Politics and Sociology.

Knowledge and Understanding

On completing the programme students should be able:

- A1. To identify, understand and apply major social scientific approaches to studying the social world; to understand their relevance to social, public and policy issues.
- A2. To use major theoretical perspectives and concepts in sociology to understand and analyse aspects of social life at local, national and global levels.
- A3. To acquire knowledge and understanding of central aspects of government and politics at local, national and global levels and of self-selected specialised topics within the discipline of politics.
- A4. To understand the distinctive characters of sociology and politics in relation to other forms of understanding, such as their relation to other disciplines and to lay explanation.
- A5. To have an understanding of the complexity of human behaviour, and a recognition of social and political contexts, social diversity and inequalities and their impact on the experiences of individuals and groups.
- A6. To identify and understand a range of classical and contemporary sociological theories and political philosophies.
- A7. To understand and evaluate the appropriateness and validity of a range of research approaches for investigating political and social issues and problems, including the recognition of ethical dimensions to social research.

For Students Undertaking a Placement Year

- A8. Apply personal and professional development strategies to prioritise, plan and manage their own skills development and learning.
- A9. Research, select and apply relevant knowledge aimed at enhancing their own skills and effectiveness in specific duties at their placement.
- A10. Demonstrate an understanding of a work environment, how it functions and their contribution to it.
- A11. 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-A7). These are supplemented by module handouts, seminars, workshops, fieldtrips, student-centred group work, computer-assisted learning and film sessions (A2). Students are also encouraged to develop knowledge through independent and guided reading which draws imaginatively on a range of source material (journal articles, monographs, e-books, edited volumes, conference papers, Internet postings, research programme briefs, and research work in progress) (A5-A7). To enhance understanding of the relationship between research and the production of sociological and political knowledge (A7), the investigation of social problems and the evaluation of policy initiatives (A3), the curriculum draws on current and contemporary research publications from the subject area.

Assessment Strategy

Knowledge and understanding (A1-A7) 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

- Problem-solving exercises
- Portfolio work
- Project
- Oral presentation (individual and group-based)
- Dissertation or equivalent research-based module proposal

Examinations and synopsis allow assessment of surface understanding of important areas of knowledge, and essays, portfolios, projects, oral presentations, critical case study and the dissertation or equivalent research-based module report assess students' depth of knowledge and understanding. The dissertation or equivalent research-based module proposal and the dissertation or equivalent research-based module 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 and political problems; 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, including qualitative and quantitative data, library, internet and other electronic sources, and governmental and non-governmental information.
- B3. To marshal, construct and propose reasoned, coherent and structured arguments, drawing upon appropriate sociological, political and allied sources of evidence.
- B4. To be critically reflexive of their own and others' production of knowledge, theory and evidence.
- B5. To develop an understanding of the complexity of human behaviour, and a recognition of social and political contexts, social diversity and inequalities and their impact on the experiences of individuals and groups in social and political systems.

Teaching and Learning Methods

Intellectual skills of logical and critical thinking (B1), skills in gathering, synthesising and evaluating information and data (B2) are introduced and developed in lectures, seminars, and workshops in a series of compulsory and optional modules spanning all stages of the degree. In each stage, students' research skills and specific intellectual skills in data production / collection, management and analysis are further developed through seminars, workshops and individual tutorials which encourage the identification of the contribution of research to the production of sociological and political knowledge (B2-B3). Through seminar discussion, problem-solving exercises, encouraging students to construct and propose reasoned and structured arguments via individual and group presentations, portfolio and project work (B3, B4), students deepen their understanding of politics and sociology and develop a critical appreciation of the contribution to and application of this knowledge to substantive areas of concern in politics and sociology (B5). All cognitive skills (B1-B5) are exercised significantly during the course of a final year dissertation or equivalent research-based module in either Sociology or Politics, the completion of which is supported by focused supervision according to each subject area provision. Attendance at the subject areas and school Seminar Programmes provides additional opportunities to develop and demonstrate critical and reflexive sociological and political understanding (B5).

Assessment Strategy

Intellectual skills (B1) 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:

- Essay
- Problem solving exercises
- Portfolio
- Project
- Oral presentation (individual and group-based)
- Dissertation or equivalent research-based module report.

Essays, portfolios, projects, examinations and oral presentations allow assessment of the varied application of ideas to particular research problems and situations. The dissertation or equivalent research-based module is the culmination in the development of such skills and allows students to show their ability to work through research problems in a number of ways and provide evidence of their development of argumentation and evaluation skills as well as the range of intellectual skills they have accumulated through the development of their own research question and investigation.

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 and political knowledge.
- C2. To formulate and investigate sociologically and politically informed questions, and to understand and evaluate the appropriateness and validity of a range of research approaches for investigating different social and political issues and policy problems, including a recognition of the ethical dimension to social research.
- C3. To critically analyse, assess and communicate empirical sociological and political evidence.
- C4. To recognise the usefulness of social and political scientific theory and evidence for the evaluation of specific social and political 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 and political research (C1) are provided in lectures, seminars and workshops in a series of compulsory and optional modules spanning all stages of the degree programme. These 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 and political knowledge (C2-C3). Through group discussion, problem-solving exercises, presentations, portfolio and project work, students develop a series of subject-specific skills through application (C2-C3), and develop a critical appreciation of the contribution to and application of this knowledge to substantive areas of political and 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 work
- Project
- Problem solving exercises
- Oral presentation (individual and group-based)
- Dissertation or equivalent research-based module report

Portfolios, projects and the dissertation or equivalent research-based module report allow students to show their ability to work through research problems in a number of ways and provide evidence of their development of argumentation and evaluation skills. The dissertation or equivalent research-based module report 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 (e.g.: written and oral), and in a variety of contexts (i.e. different audiences).

- D2. To learn, study and work in an organised, time-efficient and self-directed manner and to develop initiative and adaptability in individual working.
- 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 skills of numeracy.

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- 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 through dedicated modules in both subject areas and at all stages of the degree programme students are encouraged to develop and practice 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 key skills in a compulsory study skills module offered by Politics in Stage 1, and develop and refine them in optional modules in Stage Two and Three. Advanced key skills (in communication, IT, library research, team-working, time-management and independent study) are developed in selected modules at Stage Two and Three through coursework, seminar, workshop, problem-solving exercises (test advanced key skills and numeracy in particular) and dissertation or equivalent research-based module 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
- Group/individual oral Presentations
- Portfolios
- Problem solving exercises
- Dissertation or equivalent research-based module report

Exams assess the student's ability to plan their work and produce quality materials within specific time restrictions. Oral presentations allow for assessment of students' abilities to communicate and to work effectively together. Portfolio assessments require students to work self-directed, solve problems, be organised and work efficiently. The dissertation or equivalent research-based module 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, only the dissertation or equivalent research-based module in Stage Three is worth 40 credits.

Stage One provides a foundation in the disciplines of Politics and Sociology and introduces students to ideas within associated social science disciplines, in particular Social Anthropology.

The emphasis in each of the disciplinary areas is to develop students' ability to describe and discuss differing theories of the social world and to begin to demonstrate how theoretical knowledge can be used to understand empirical, practical and policy issues. It is in this Stage that students are encouraged to make the distinctions between the disciplinary fields, and also to recognise their interconnectedness. A tailor-made Politics and Sociology module specifically designed for the joint honours degree supports this process. Stage One also enables students to gain a preliminary understanding of the way that questions about the social world are generated within the two subject areas; to gain awareness of the major theoretical perspectives and concepts in the two subject areas; to develop rudimentary skills in applying theory to specific social and political issues; and to develop an understanding of the principles and practices of communicating sociological and political knowledge.

All joint honours students in Stage One take two compulsory modules. Both modules allow students to cover a range of key skills, discipline-specific understandings, social and political theories, and epistemological and methodological approaches. Stage One students then take a further 40 credits in Sociology and a further 40 credits in Politics. All students must take 60 credits of modules in total in each discipline.

Stage Two students are required to take a 20 credit compulsory module in Sociology as foundation for research skills and basic preparation for the dissertation or equivalent research-based module in Stage Three. Stage Two students are then required to take modules (subject to availability) to the value of 40 credits in Sociology and 60 credits in Politics. At this stage students also need to decide in which subject they will be doing their dissertation or whether they will take an equivalent research-based module (community-based research in Politics). There is another compulsory Sociology module which is a pre-requisite module for students wishing to undertake a dissertation or equivalent research-based module in sociology in Stage Three. There is no pre-requisite for the dissertation in Politics or equivalent research-based module in Politics.

At Stage Two, the emphasis is on deepening students' ability to undertake scholarly work through fieldwork-based and non-fieldwork based research, and to enrich and extend their understanding of the key concepts and theoretical approaches in sociology and politics. In politics these will develop the core areas of political systems and political thought and in sociology these will cover core areas in sociology. 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; to understand political systems, discourses, ideas and practices and their role in social public and political life; to develop an understanding of social structural change; to understand the ethical implications of sociological and political inquiry; and to recognise the relevance of sociological and political knowledge to social, public and civil policy at local, national and global levels of analysis. All LL32 students will develop an understanding of different methodological approaches in the social sciences and their appropriateness to specific research questions in sociology, but also in the field of politics. Together, the modules in Politics and Sociology will help students to develop a sense of the standards required to obtain the best honours degree of which they are capable. Cognitive and key skills are further developed in each area.

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 optional specialist modules, which students may select to the value of 80 credits chosen to add up along with the dissertation or equivalent research-based module to 60 credits in each of the two subjects. The second objective is met through a designated dissertation or equivalent research-based module (40 credits in either Sociology or 40 Politics) which gives students the chance to embark on an extended, self-initiated study project of their own choosing and their own design. In the case of the community-based research in Politics module this will be in part based on collaborative group research. The dissertation or equivalent research-based module reflects the culmination of students' programme of study, and allows the demonstration of specialist interest, subject-specific skills (most especially research skills), and cognitive and key transferable skills. The balance of credits, including dissertation or equivalent research-based module, is equal for both disciplines.

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. This opportunity for both choice and specialisation in Stage Three is the important dynamic behind the production of high quality student work, which is often most manifest in the dissertation or equivalent research-based module. In Stage Three the students also have the opportunity to take a Study Abroad 40 credit module, normally in semester one (credits nominally in Sociology), which involves closely monitored and evaluated attendance at an overseas University taking modules in sociology and politics and working on their dissertation. Students are not able to combine the Study Abroad module with the Community-Based Research in Politics module which serves as an alternative to the Dissertation in Sociology or in Politics. The Study Abroad 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 have the option to take part in a Careers Placement Year between Stages 2 and 3. During this year students complete one compulsory module worth 120 credits. This does not contribute to their overall degree classification.

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

The Newcastle degree is distinctive in offering a tailor-made introductory module exploring the relationship between the two disciplines at Stage 1. In Stages 2 and 3 we offer students a balanced framework in terms of the relative weights of the two subject areas in module selection. This gives the Newcastle programme two distinctive aspects:

- a) an even/equal balance of study of politics and sociology subjects, throughout the degree programme
- b) a clear focus on the subject areas of politics and sociology. With the single exception of the Careers Development module in Stage 2, modules beyond the two main subject areas are not permitted within the current degree regulations.

The programme offers joint students the opportunity to undertake a community based and policy-relevant group collaborative research instead of a traditional individual dissertation, enabling joint students to bring together their understanding of the social contexts of political issues. The programme is also unusual in offering anthropological perspectives included in modules throughout all three stages within the subject area of Sociology. Students can opt to take one 40-credit module (normally semester 1 of Stage three) on the Study Abroad module.

Programme regulations (link to on-line version)

[LL32 Programme Regulations 23-24](#)

13 Support for Student Learning

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

[Generic Information](#)

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: <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.