

**PROGRAMME SPECIFICATION****Newcastle  
University**

<b>1 Awarding Institution</b>	Newcastle University
<b>2 Teaching Institution</b>	Newcastle University
<b>3 Final Award</b>	MA / PG Diploma
<b>4 Programme Title</b>	Sociology
<b>5 Programme Code</b>	4105 F/P (MA) 3423 F/P (PG Diploma)
<b>6 Programme Accreditation</b>	N/A
<b>7 QAA Subject Benchmark(s)</b>	N/A
<b>8 FHEQ Level</b>	Level 7
<b>9 Last updated</b>	December 2024

**10 Programme Aims**

- 1** To provide learning opportunities for graduates from a wide range of educational and professional backgrounds to acquire an understanding of the theoretical traditions, concepts, philosophical principles and epistemological frameworks that underpin sociology as a discipline;
- 2** To enable graduates to acquire knowledge in selected key areas in sociology including identity, citizenship, social transformation, social inequalities, sexuality, health, and others;
- 3** To produce graduates with the ability to conceptualise, design, undertake and write up a piece of original research in the form of a dissertation;
- 4** To produce employable graduates who can proceed to careers in the public or private sector, or who may undertake further academic training;
- 5** To contribute to the University's objectives by providing high quality training to an increasing number of postgraduates and enhancing their key skills and employability;
- 6** To provide a qualification which meets the learning outcomes at level 7 in the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications;
- 7** To provide a programme that conforms to University policies and to QAA codes of practice.

**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 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 (MA / PGDip)
- A2** awareness and understanding of the variety of philosophical principles and epistemological frameworks that underpin approaches to social inquiry (MA / PGDip)
- A3** understanding of the way in which social divisions (including gender, class, race,

<b>A4</b>	<p>ethnicity, sexuality and disability) are generated as structures of power and patterns of inequality, and how these are reproduced and transformed over time; (MA / PGDip)</p> <p>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 (MA / PGDip)</p>
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#### **Teaching and Learning Methods**

Theoretical traditions and concepts within sociology (A1) will be explored through lectures, group exercises, and student presentations in various Sociology 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 modules. An improved awareness of the importance of social divisions and social change (A3-A4) will be developed through the lectures, group exercises, and student presentations in modules and through independent reading and one-to-one tutoring. All of the sociological skills (A1-A4) 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. All students will participate in the annual MA dissertation conference which provides an opportunity for the consolidation of their skills and additional feedback on their dissertation projects from the wider Sociology staff team.

#### **Assessment Strategy**

All of the learning outcomes (A1-A4) will be assessed through written assignments 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 (MA / PGDip)
- (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 (MA / PGDip)
- (iii) show knowledge and understanding of the social and political context of research activity and its uses. (MA / PGDip)

##### **B2 Data collection and analysis**

- (i) a knowledge and understanding of the application of selected methods of data collection (MA / PGDip)
- (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. (MA / PGDip)
- (iii) an understanding of strengths and weaknesses of different types of data and the development of a critical use of sources. (MA / PGDip)

#### **Teaching and Learning Methods**

Teaching strategy

B1 (i) and (ii) will be delivered through the research and dissertation preparation modules. 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. The teaching strategy for B2 (i - iii) is a combination of lectures, workshops and data analysis practicals.

#### Learning strategy

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

#### **Assessment Strategy**

For B1 will be teamwork assessment, practical assessments and a written report. Assessment strategy for B2 will be a combination of data analysis practical's a written report 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 study and research, including annals, books, journals, theses, conference proceedings, and resources available electronically and on the WWW (MA / PGDip)
- (ii) the skills to maintain a personal research bibliography and other electronic record keeping, where relevant (MA / PGDip)
- (iii) IT skills, including word processing, storage of data, computerized qualitative and quantitative data analysis, production of written material, presentations and handouts (MA / PGDip)
- (iv). Conference poster production and presentation

###### **C2** Ethical issues

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

#### **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 by developing an initial bibliography for their dissertation. Students acquire knowledge of ethical issues through teamwork, case studies and independent reading.

#### **Assessment Strategy**

General research skills will be assessed by means of coursework and the dissertation. IT skills will be assessed through a range of tasks including word processing of written course work, use of qualitative and quantitative analysis software in relevant modules and dissertation work, use of bibliographic databases for coursework and dissertation, accessing Blackboard (Virtual Learning Environment), and the production of the dissertation and accompanying bibliography. Ethical issues will be assessed by a combination of written assessment and the dissertation.

#### **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 (MA / PGDip)
- D2** the skills of effective written communication and presentation (MA / PGDip)
- D3** the skills to manage research, including writing proposals, planning the research project, and implementation on time (MA / PGDip)
- D4** the ability to work independently, with initiative, and to work effectively as a member of both subject-specific and multi-disciplinary teams (MA / PGDip)

#### **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 assignments, D3 is indirectly evaluated through fulfilment of module requirements in a timely manner, and D4 will be evaluated through student team presentations and groupwork 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 (MA) or 8 months full time (PG Dip)

Two years part time (MA and PG Dip)

MA - 180 credits (120 coursework, 60 dissertation) comprising of: 120 credits compulsory (4 x 20 credit module, 2 x 10 credit modules 1 x 60 credit dissertation) and 20 optional credits

PG Dip – 120 credits (120 coursework) comprising of 100 compulsory credits (2x10 credit and 4x 20 credit modules) and 20 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 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;
- a knowledge of selected key areas in sociology including identity, citizenship, social transformation, social inequalities, sexuality, health, and others;
- 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)**

[Programme Regulations 2025-26](#)

**13 Support for Student Learning**

Generic information regarding University provision is available [here](#).

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

Generic information regarding University provision is available [here](#).

*Accreditation reports*

N/A

*Additional mechanisms*

N/A

**15 Regulation of assessment**

Generic information regarding University provision is available [here](#).

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

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

Degree Programme and University Regulations: <http://www.ncl.ac.uk/regulations/>

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.