BA Sociology

UCAS code: L300

For students entering Part 1 in 2004

Awarding Institution:	The University of Reading
Teaching Institution:	The University of Reading
Relevant QAA subject benchmarking group(s):	Sociology
Faculty of Economics and Social Sciences	Programme length: 3 years

Date of specification: June 2004
Programme Director: Dr David Bartram
Programme Adviser: Dr David Bartram
Board of Studies: Sociology
Accreditation:

Summary of programme aims

The programme aims to provide a distinctive degree-level education in sociology. The curriculum is designed to provide students with four main components: 1. training in theory, methods, substance, and analysis; 2. key skills (verbal, analytical, quantitative, research); 3. progression in learning and pedagogical experiences; 4. exposure to active research from the very first year. The curriculum centres on the four core areas of interest in the department: culture, economics, politics, and stratification. Methodological proficiency is an underlying component of the programme. Students encounter a variety of concepts, approaches and methods for the study of sociology and are provided with a critical understanding of the nature and structures of human social life, across time and space. They have a wide range of options that increase during the degree course. Students progress from introductory and survey modules to more specialist options involving greater independent study. They also acquire a number of generic intellectual and transferable skills that prepare them for the world of work.

Transferable skills

The University's Strategy for Teaching and Learning has identified a number of generic transferable skills which all students are expected to have developed by the end of their degree programme. In following this programme, students will have had the opportunity to enhance their skills relating to career management, communication (both written and oral), information handling, numeracy, problem-solving, team working and use of information technology.

Programme content

The programme begins in Part 1 with an introduction to basic sociological foundations (terms and categories, logic of sociological reasoning and debate, basic methodological approaches) and sensitises students to the empirical data and debates of main sociological issues (e.g. inequality, political organization and change, race and gender, etc.). The second and third years build upon this foundation, as the curriculum centres on the four core areas of interest in the department: culture, economics, politics, and stratification. Students encounter a variety of concepts, approaches and methods for the study of sociology and are provided with a critical understanding of the nature and structures of human social life, across time and space. They have a wide range of options that increase during the degree course. Students progress from introductory and survey modules to more specialist options involving greater independent study. They also acquire a number of generic intellectual and transferable skills that prepare them for the world of work.

Part 1 students who wish to continue in Sociology, either as a single subject major programme or a joint subject major programme, must successfully complete the compulsory modules (a total of 40 credits), and have the option of obtaining an additional twenty credits from two optional modules (carrying 10 credits each).

In Part 2, students take compulsory modules totalling 120 credits. These cover theory, statistics, and methods as well as three of the four principal branches of the discipline offered in our

program. In Part 3, students must write a dissertation (40 credits) and take 80 credits of optional courses.

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Part 1 (two terms)		*Credits*	*Level*
Compulsory modules			
SO1INT	Introduction to Sociology (Autumn)	20	C
SO1MET	Methods 1: Main Methodological Approaches in Sociology (Spring)	20	C
Optional modules:			
SO1CES	Contemporary European Society (Autumn)	10	C
SO1CSI	Contemporary Social Issues (Spring)	10	C

Note
1. Students who choose to take the optional modules *must* take both modules;
2. In order to progress to Part 2 Sociology, students must successfully complete the 2 compulsory modules.

Part 2 (two terms)		*Credits*	*Level*
Compulsory modules			
SO2MET	Methods 2 (Spring)	20	I
SO2SS1	Statistics 1 (Autumn)	20	I
SO2SS2	Statistics 2 (Spring)	20	I
SO2THE	Theory: The Classical Tradition (Autumn)	20	I
SO2STS	Study of Sociology	10	I
	And three of the following four modules:		
SO2CUL	Sociology of Culture	10	I
SO2POL	Political Sociology	10	I
SO2ECO	Economic Sociology	10	I
SO2STR	Social Stratification	10	I

5 credits of the 120 total are allocated to Career Management Skills, on the distributed model.

Part 3 (two terms)	*Credits*	*Level*

Optional modules:
Students can follow two tracks in Part 3. They can choose to write a dissertation (carrying 40 credits), in which case they will also take four 10-credit options and two 20-credit advanced seminars, from a list to be provided by the department.

Alternatively, they can forego the dissertation, in which case they take four 10-credit options and four 20-credit seminars.

Options are lecture classes that require some coursework (40% of final mark) but require an examination (60% of final mark). Advanced seminars emphasize student participation in class discussions and research; final marks are determined entirely by coursework.

Progression requirements
In order to proceed to Part 2, students must obtain at least 40% in each of the sociology modules and a pass overall. The Examiners may at their discretion admit to Part 2 students who have passed Part 1 overall but have not met the requirement stated above. To proceed from Part 2 to Part 3 students must obtain at least 40% in the compulsory modules and an overall average of at least 40%. To be eligible for Honours, students must obtain at least 40% in all Part 3 modules and an overall average of at least 40%.

Summary of teaching and assessment
In Sociology, teaching styles change from large lectures (Part 1) to lectures and/or seminars (Part 2), to predominantly seminars in Part 3. Modules are assessed by a mixture of coursework and formal examination. The ratio of coursework (including seminar performance) to examination increases as the degree progresses. In general, the Department strives to achieve a balance between coursework and examinations in the assignment of a final mark in a module. There is a 50:50 weight for coursework and examinations in the overall degree programme (Parts 2 and 3). The weight of examinations diminishes from the first to the third year.

Admission requirements
Entrants to this programme are normally required to have obtained:
Grade C or better in English in GCSE; and achieved
UCAS Tariff: 280 points from 3 A Levels or 300 points from 3 A Levels and 1 AS Level
International Baccalaureat: 30 points; or
Irish Leaving Certificate: Four Bs and a C in four other subjects
Two AS grades are accepted in place of one A-Level

Support for students and their learning
University support for students and their learning falls into two categories. Learning support includes IT Services, which has several hundred computers, and the University Library, which, across its three sites, holds over a million volumes, subscribes to around 4,000 current periodicals, has a range of electronic sources of information, and houses the Student Access to Independent Learning (S@IL) computer-based teaching and learning facilities. There are language laboratory facilities both for those students studying on a language degree and for those taking modules offered by the Institution-wide Language Programme. Student guidance and welfare support is provided by Personal Tutors, the Careers Advisory Service, the University's Special Needs Advisor, Study Advisors, Hall Wardens and the Students' Union.

Additionally, Sociology provides supports within the department. During the second term of Statistics, students are introduced to Career Management Skills to help them with the practical side of careers and employment. In Part 1 students are introduced to Information Technology skills directly related to sociological study and research. Students have individual tutors who help with academic progression.

Career prospects
Students graduating in sociology have pursued a wide range of career paths. Apart from those undertaking postgraduate study for careers in higher education, many other students undertake further study related to their chosen career. The rigorous nature of the programme, along with its development of transferable skills, makes Reading Sociology graduates highly suitable for careers in private sector management, the civil service, journalism, or local government; a sizeable minority follow careers in accountancy, banking or commerce; others have pursued interests in law. The degree also prepares graduates for work in social science research units such as the Institute for Public-Policy Research, Policy Studies Institute or Chatham House.

Opportunities for study abroad or for placements

Students are encouraged to spend part of their second year studying at a European University, via the Socrates programme, or in the United States, via the American Studies exchange programme. While such exchanges may involve some additional financial expenditures and some adjustments to coursework at Reading, the department believes that these exchanges offer an excellent opportunity to broaden educational and life experience. In the first instance interested students should see their personal tutor.
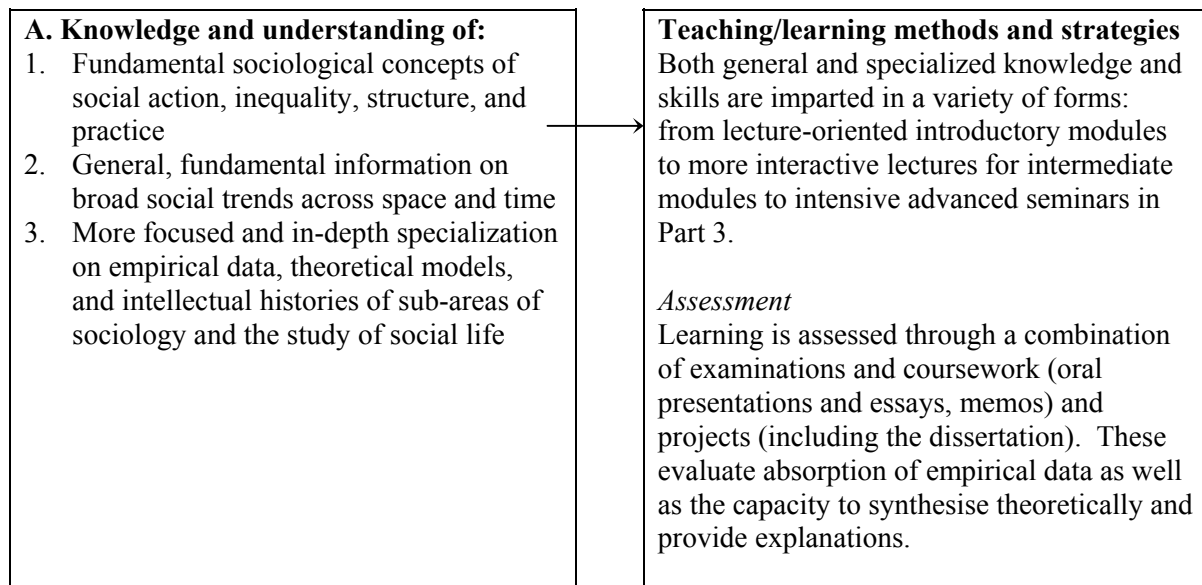
Educational aims of the programme
The aims of this programme are intellectual and practical. Intellectually, members of staff aim to widen students' capacities for critical thinking, analysis and problem-solving, asking questions and deconstructing others' arguments. Students also learn a variety of explanatory schemata and their application in understanding them in social life. Practically, the programme imparts technical skills: statistical methods and computer-related analytic skills (e.g. use of SPSS); use of Information Technology; enhanced writing capacity through continuous assessment and the dissertation.

Programme Outcomes
The Sociology programme aims to provide a broad range of practical, analytic, and theoretical knowledge and skills. More specifically, the programme offers techniques and methods for research, in the following areas:

Knowledge and Understanding

A. Knowledge and understanding of:	**Teaching/learning methods and strategies**
1. Fundamental sociological concepts of social action, inequality, structure, and practice	Both general and specialized knowledge and skills are imparted in a variety of forms: from lecture-oriented introductory modules to more interactive lectures for intermediate modules to intensive advanced seminars in Part 3.
2. General, fundamental information on broad social trends across space and time	
3. More focused and in-depth specialization on empirical data, theoretical models, and intellectual histories of sub-areas of sociology and the study of social life	*Assessment* Learning is assessed through a combination of examinations and coursework (oral presentations and essays, memos) and projects (including the dissertation). These evaluate absorption of empirical data as well as the capacity to synthesise theoretically and provide explanations.

Skills and other attributes

B. Intellectual skills – able to: 1. Critically analyse and deconstruct claims and arguments 2. Think in terms of cause-effect relations, variables, and theories 3. Organize arguments through the use of logic and empirical data 4. Apply concepts and procedures of rigorous data collection and analysis	**Teaching/learning methods and strategies** Theory and methods are at the heart of the discipline. Consequently, all sociology modules involve deconstruction and application of a wide range of theoretical frameworks, training students to analyse and apply different types of data relevant to sociological issues. *Assessment* Examinations and written work assess students' capacities to present an argument that is a careful, critical, coherent and synthetic combination of theory and data. Hence, all intellectual skills are addressed in each module, although some modules, such as Theory and Methods, focus more narrowly on theoretical construction or the logic and technique of data collection.
C. Practical skills – able to: 1. Design a research project, from setting a research question, to implementing it with data collection and analysis techniques 2. Write coherent arguments 3. Work in teams (in group projects) as well as individually (dissertation or seminar papers) 4. Evaluate policies, social trends, and other social data	**Teaching/learning methods and strategies** While research techniques arise in each module, these are specifically addressed in Methods modules. Students must take at least one Methods module per year (including Part 1). Career skills are also addressed in the mandatory Methods module in Part 2. *Assessment* Students are formally assessed in research and analysis techniques by means of the coursework required by the Methods modules. Some modules include group projects to encourage teamwork and memoranda to encourage precise analysis and critical commentary of readings or issues at hand.

D. Transferable skills – focusing on:
1. Writing
2. Presentation
3. Team Work
4. Analysis
5. Numeracy
6. Use and application of IT

Use and Application of IT – In a world increasingly reliant on information technology, we feel it is in students' best interests to gain competence with IT and general information retrieval skills for electronically-based data. We require students to attend IT classes in their second year (and offer a special seminar on Internet Studies); further, most of our staff will be using the web-based Blackboard in their teaching. The mandatory IT classes not only familiarise students with Blackboard but also familiarise them with information search and retrieval skills (e.g. information search on the internet and use of data-bases) and communication skills (e.g. use of e-mail, chat sites and discussion rooms, electronic bulletin boards). Please note that these IT classes do not constitute a module but underpin all Part 2 studies in a distributed manner.

Assessment
Most of these skills are tested through coursework and formal examination.

Teaching/learning methods and strategies
Most modules engage students in a wide range of coursework activities, which include writing short and long essays, making seminar presentations, working collaboratively on group projects, analysing data (both qualitative and quantitative) and arguments. The Department further requires all students to take specialist modules in IT skills, including interactive technology, while modules in statistics and quantitative research methods develop students' numeracy skills.

Writing – In order to bring together methodological, theoretical and substantive knowledge, the Department has made the writing of a dissertation mandatory in the final year. Furthermore, the Department requires a number of Advanced seminars of its third-year students; these Advanced seminars are based on intensive writing. This addresses part of the need for skills and experience in information handling.

Presentation – One important transferable skill is oral exposition: the ability to present clearly and precisely while being able to field questions and "think on one's feet." We address this both through the presentation and interactive components of Advanced Seminars (which require students to make presentations), and also in many standard courses within the curriculum.

Team Work – Many of our methodological courses require students to work in teams. This is the typical way of working in today's working environments (students having to learn how to deal with free riders).

Analysis – One important aspect of information handling is the retrieval and use of data for answering complex questions (about social life, business, etc.). To address this need, we aim at imparting strong analytical skills to our students. Students must learn the art of taking arguments apart as well as putting them together. This is an integral part of most options and seminars.

Numeracy – We offer a wide range of statistical options, aimed at preparing students for work requiring data analysis.

Please note: This specification provides a concise summary of the main features of the undergraduate programme and the learning outcomes that a typical student might reasonably expect to achieve by studying sociology in this department. More detailed information on the learning outcomes, content and teaching, learning and assessment methods of each module can be found in module and programme handbooks.