

## **BSc Sociology**

**UCAS code: L310**

Awarding Institution:  
Teaching Institution:  
Relevant QAA subject benchmarking group(s):  
Faculty of Economic and Social Sciences  
For students entering Part 1 in 2003  
Programme Director: Dr David Bartram  
Programme Adviser: Dr David Bartram  
Board of Studies: Sociology  
Accreditation: Not appropriate

The University of Reading  
The University of Reading  
Sociology  
Programme length: 3 years  
Date of specification: January 2005

### **Summary of programme aims**

The programme aims to provide a distinctive degree-level education in sociology with special emphasis on research methods. 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 BSc differs from the BA by adding more coursework and rigor in methodological training.

### **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 centrepiece to the BSc is its stress on research methods. 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. Methodological proficiency is an underlying component of the programme, and students' methodological training is stressed in each year, in particular in Part 3. 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.

The Sociology BSc programme involves a combination of compulsory modules (determined by the Department) and a number of optional modules (selected by the students, in conjunction with their programme advisor).

The programme is divided into three parts that form an intellectual progression through the discipline. Part 1 students who wish to continue in Sociology 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 take two modules (20 credits each) open only to BSc students (focusing mainly on research methods), write a dissertation (40 credits), and take 40 credits of optional courses.

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**Part 1 (three terms)** *Credits*    *Level*

*Compulsory modules*

SO1INT	Introduction to Sociology	20	C
SO1MET	Methods 1: Main Methodological Approaches in Sociology	20	C

*Optional modules* (both of which must be taken together):

SO1CES	Contemporary European Society	10	C
SO1CSI	Contemporary Social Issues	10	C

**Part 2 (three terms)** *Credits*    *Level*

*Compulsory modules*

SO2ME2	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 (three terms)** *Credits*    *Level*

*Compulsory modules*

SO3AMT	Advanced Methods Topics	20	H
SO3SOA	Sociological Analysis (Autumn)	20	H
SO3DIS	Dissertation (full-year)	40	H

*Optional modules:*

Students must take two 10-credit options and one 20-credit advanced seminars, from a list to be provided by the department. Options are lecture classes that require some coursework (40% of final mark) but carry 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%.

Students must achieve not less than 30% in any module except that marks of less than 30% in a total of 20 credits may be condoned, provided that the candidate has pursued the course for the module(s) with reasonable diligence and has not been absent from the examination without reasonable cause.

### **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. 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. The conventions for classification are included in the Programme Handbook, but you should note that weighting between Part 2 and Part 3 for classification purposes is 33% and 67%.

### **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. Support for students in their studies is provided through the University's Personal Academic Record (PAR) Scheme, in which students meet their personal tutors regularly to review their progress.

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. The in-depth training in research methods offered by the BSc in Sociology endows students with highly-marketable skills. 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: a wide range of research methods, both qualitative and quantitative, 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***

<p><b>A. Knowledge and understanding of:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Fundamental sociological concepts of social action, inequality, structure, and practice</li><li>2. General, fundamental information on broad social trends across space and time</li><li>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</li></ol>	<p><b>Teaching/learning methods and strategies</b></p> <p>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.</p> <p><i>Assessment</i></p> <p>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.</p>
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## *Skills and other attributes*

<p><b>B. Intellectual skills</b> – able to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Critically analyse and deconstruct claims and arguments</li><li>2. Think in terms of cause-effect relations, variables, and theories</li><li>3. Organize arguments through the use of logic and empirical data</li><li>4. Apply concepts and procedures of rigorous data collection and analysis</li></ol>	<p><b>Teaching/learning methods and strategies</b> 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.</p> <p><i>Assessment</i> 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.</p>
<p><b>C. Practical skills</b> – able to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Design a research project, from setting a research question, to implementing it with data collection and analysis techniques</li><li>2. Write coherent arguments</li><li>3. Work in teams (in group projects) as well as individually (dissertation or seminar papers)</li><li>4. Evaluate policies, social trends, and other social data</li></ol>	<p><b>Teaching/learning methods and strategies</b> 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.</p> <p><i>Assessment</i> 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.</p>

**D. Transferable skills – focusing on:**

1. Writing
2. Presentation
3. Team Work
4. Analysis
5. Numeracy
6. Use and application of IT

**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** – The BSc offers a wide range of statistical options, aimed at preparing students for work requiring data analysis.

**D. Transferable skills (continued)**

**Teaching/learning methods and strategies (continued)**

**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.

*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.