

# Subject Benchmark Statement

**Sociology**

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## How can I use this document?

This document is a Subject Benchmark Statement for Sociology that defines what can be expected of a graduate in the subject, in terms of what they might know, do and understand at the end of their studies.

You may want to read this document if you are:

- involved in the design, delivery and review of programmes of study in Sociology or related subjects
- a prospective student thinking about studying Sociology, or a current student of the subject, to find out what may be involved
- an employer, to find out about the knowledge and skills generally expected of a graduate in Sociology.

Explanations of unfamiliar terms used in this Subject Benchmark Statement can be found in the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education's (QAA's) glossary.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The QAA glossary is available at: [www.qaa.ac.uk/about-us/glossary](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/about-us/glossary).

## About Subject Benchmark Statements

Subject Benchmark Statements form part of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (Quality Code) which sets out the Expectations that all providers of UK higher education reviewed by QAA are required to meet.<sup>2</sup> They are a component of Part A: Setting and Maintaining Academic Standards, which includes the Expectation that higher education providers 'consider and take account of relevant Subject Benchmark Statements' in order to secure threshold academic standards.<sup>3</sup>

Subject Benchmark Statements describe the nature of study and the academic standards expected of graduates in specific subject areas, and in respect of particular qualifications. They provide a picture of what graduates in a particular subject might reasonably be expected to know, do and understand at the end of their programme of study.

Subject Benchmark Statements are used as reference points in the design, delivery and review of academic programmes. They provide general guidance for articulating the learning outcomes associated with the programme but are not intended to represent a national curriculum in a subject or to prescribe set approaches to teaching, learning or assessment. Instead, they allow for flexibility and innovation in programme design within a framework agreed by the subject community. Further guidance about programme design, development and approval, learning and teaching, assessment of students, and programme monitoring and review is available in Part B: Assuring and Enhancing Academic Quality of the Quality Code in the following Chapters:<sup>4</sup>

- *Chapter B1: Programme Design, Development and Approval*
- *Chapter B3: Learning and Teaching*
- *Chapter B6: Assessment of Students and the Recognition of Prior Learning*
- *Chapter B8: Programme Monitoring and Review.*

For some subject areas, higher education providers may need to consider other reference points in addition to the Subject Benchmark Statement in designing, delivering and reviewing programmes. These may include requirements set out by professional, statutory and regulatory bodies, national occupational standards and industry or employer expectations. In such cases, the Subject Benchmark Statement may provide additional guidance around academic standards not covered by these requirements.<sup>5</sup> The relationship between academic and professional or regulatory requirements is made clear within individual statements, but it is the responsibility of individual higher education providers to decide how they use this information. The responsibility for academic standards remains with the higher education provider who awards the degree.

Subject Benchmark Statements are written and maintained by subject specialists drawn from and acting on behalf of the subject community. The process is facilitated by QAA. In order to ensure the continuing currency of Subject Benchmark Statements, QAA initiates regular reviews of their content, five years after first publication, and every seven years subsequently.

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<sup>2</sup> The Quality Code, available at [www.qaa.ac.uk/assuring-standards-and-quality/the-quality-code](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/assuring-standards-and-quality/the-quality-code), aligns with the *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area*, available at: [www.enqa.eu/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/ESG\\_endorsed-with-changed-foreword.pdf](http://www.enqa.eu/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/ESG_endorsed-with-changed-foreword.pdf).

<sup>3</sup> Part A: Setting and Maintaining Academic Standards, available at: [www.qaa.ac.uk/assuring-standards-and-quality/the-quality-code/quality-code-part-a](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/assuring-standards-and-quality/the-quality-code/quality-code-part-a).

<sup>4</sup> Individual chapters are available at: [www.qaa.ac.uk/assuring-standards-and-quality/the-quality-code/quality-code-part-b](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/assuring-standards-and-quality/the-quality-code/quality-code-part-b).

<sup>5</sup> See further Part A: Setting and Maintaining Academic Standards, available at: [www.qaa.ac.uk/assuring-standards-and-quality/the-quality-code/quality-code-part-a](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/assuring-standards-and-quality/the-quality-code/quality-code-part-a).

## **Relationship to legislation**

Higher education providers are responsible for meeting the requirements of legislation and any other regulatory requirements placed upon them, for example by funding bodies. The Quality Code does not interpret legislation nor does it incorporate statutory or regulatory requirements. Sources of information about other requirements and examples of guidance and good practice are signposted within the Subject Benchmark Statement where appropriate. Higher education providers are responsible for how they use these resources.<sup>6</sup>

## **Equality and diversity**

The Quality Code embeds consideration of equality and diversity matters throughout. Promoting equality involves treating everyone with equal dignity and worth, while also raising aspirations and supporting achievement for people with diverse requirements, entitlements and backgrounds. An inclusive environment for learning anticipates the varied requirements of learners, and aims to ensure that all students have equal access to educational opportunities. Higher education providers, staff and students all have a role in, and a responsibility for, promoting equality.

Equality of opportunity involves enabling access for people who have differing individual requirements as well as eliminating arbitrary and unnecessary barriers to learning. In addition, disabled students and non-disabled students are offered learning opportunities that are equally accessible to them, by means of inclusive design wherever possible and by means of reasonable individual adjustments wherever necessary.

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<sup>6</sup> See further the *UK Quality Code for Higher Education: General Introduction*, available at: [www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/information-and-guidance/publication?PubID=181](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/information-and-guidance/publication?PubID=181).

## About this Subject Benchmark Statement

This Subject Benchmark Statement refers to bachelor's degrees in Sociology.<sup>7</sup>

This version of the statement forms its 3rd edition, following initial publication of the Subject Benchmark Statement in 2002 and review and revision in 2007.<sup>8</sup>

### Note on alignment with higher education sector coding systems

Programmes of study which use this Subject Benchmark Statement as a reference point are generally classified under the following codes in the Joint Academic Coding System (JACS).<sup>9</sup>

L300	(Sociology)
L310	(Applied sociology)
L311	(Applied criminology)
L312	(Victimology)
L320	(Gender studies)
L321	(Women's studies)
L322	(Men's studies)
L330	(Ethnic studies)
L340	(Disability in society)
L350	(Religion in society)
L360	(Socio-economics)
L370	(Social theory)
L371	(Social hierarchy)
L380	(Political sociology)
L390	(Sociology not elsewhere classified)
M270	(Sociology of law)
W357	(Sociology of music).

In addition there are elements of Sociology in many other subjects including some others listed under B (Subjects Allied to Medicine), C (Biological Sciences), I (Computer Science), J (Technologies), K (Architecture, Building and Planning) L (Social Studies) N (Business and Administrative Studies) P (Mass Communication and Documentation) V (Historical and Philosophical Studies) and in area studies listed under R (European Languages, Literature and Related Subjects) and T (Eastern, Asiatic, African, American and Australasian Languages, Literature and Related Subjects).

### Summary of changes from the previous Subject Benchmark Statement (2007)

This review was undertaken by a larger group than the review in 2007, designed to more broadly reflect the range of providers as well as reflecting professional interests and the involvement of the employer perspective (through group membership as well as through the consultation).

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<sup>7</sup> Bachelor's degrees are at level 6 in *The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* and level 10 in *The Framework for Qualifications of Higher Education Institutions in Scotland*, as published in *The Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications of UK Degree-Awarding Bodies*, available at: [www.qaa.ac.uk/assuring-standards-and-quality/the-quality-code/qualifications](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/assuring-standards-and-quality/the-quality-code/qualifications).

<sup>8</sup> Further information is available in the *Recognition scheme for Subject Benchmark Statements*, available at: [www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/information-and-guidance/publication?PubID=190](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/information-and-guidance/publication?PubID=190).

<sup>9</sup> Further information about JACS is available at: [www.hesa.ac.uk/content/view/1776/649](http://www.hesa.ac.uk/content/view/1776/649).

The Statement has been updated to reflect changes in the use of language and also to ensure a fuller consideration of ethics and the effects of globalisation. Further, the group considered that it was appropriate to remove the definition of the typical standard, and to add new sections on assessment (see Section 5) and on employability (see Section 7).

# 1 Introduction

1.1 Sociology is the study of how humans shape and are shaped by the world they live in.

1.2 Sociology is both theoretical and evidence based. The practice of sociology deploys theory and evidence. It also critically reflects on its own methods, the processes of gathering sociological knowledge and achieving understanding. Sociology recognises that change is intrinsic to social life, and this drives Sociology's dynamic character. The scope of sociological interest encompasses all social change including demographic, cultural, economic, political and technological, from local to global. New threats to societies, the natural world or human life, such as climate change, inevitably become topics; sociologists study social processes driving and responding to change. Sociologists also have a lasting commitment to core concepts, along with a number of overarching issues and concerns, though these are subject to recurrent re-appraisal. Recurring concerns include:

- the social classifications of gender, sexuality, social class, race, ethnicity, nationality, citizenship, religion, age, and disability
- the relationship between individuals and groups
- social action, social practices, social institutions, social structures and societies
- cultural processes and the social construction of knowledges, discourses and cultures
- the self, identities and difference
- the interconnection between global and local social processes and problems
- the relationship between biography and history
- theories of power
- conflict and cohesion
- the underpinnings of social order
- social inequalities and social divisions
- diverse cultures and contexts
- causes and consequences of social change.

1.3 As a theoretical discipline, its concerns relate directly to the other social science disciplines. Its concerns also relate to those of philosophy and political theory, as well as to practical ethics and to social, public and civic policy. There are numerous, legitimate, sources of theoretical diversity and no single theoretical framework should dominate the discipline. What is essential to the subject is that students learn to appraise theories and to assess them in relation to evidence.

1.4 As an evidence-based discipline, Sociology insists on the scrutiny and evidenced re-assessment of everyday understandings of the social world. It is a discipline in which theoretical considerations and epistemological scepticism are combined with an appreciation of the need to establish firm grounds for our knowledge of the social. It employs a wide diversity of research strategies, data sources and methods, many of which are shared with other disciplines, and it shares broad generic skills with many other areas of enquiry. Its research strategies, data sources and methods are constantly being refreshed to adapt to new challenges, developments and possibilities, sometimes starting trends taken up in other disciplines. Its distinctive ways of knowing and understanding, however, are rooted in sociological perspectives and insights.



1.5 Sociology is a reflexive discipline that aims to develop a critical awareness of and engagement with the social world. This involves questioning taken for granted assumptions. Actions, artefacts, beliefs, circumstances, identities, institutions, organisations, practices, structures, societies, relationships and other social constructions are examined in their wider social contexts, tracing social processes, including mechanisms and patterns of exercising power. This approach enables better informed understanding of current beliefs and practices and consideration of the possibilities of innovation and change.

1.6 Those who study the social world are, at the same time, members of that world, and Sociology aims to encourage self-reflection on the nature of our knowledge and active critical engagement with the social world.

1.7 Sociological knowledge provides a basis for examining and evaluating all social constructions, including social, public, and civic policy. It informs interventions and strategies for dealing with social problems at the local and global level and enables innovative thinking about remaking social worlds.

1.8 Sociology graduates should understand the distinctively social standpoints of Sociology and the explanatory value of social analysis. This necessarily includes familiarity with the analysis of a variety of forms of human interaction, from micro to macro, their interconnections and dynamics.

1.9 Students of Sociology should be able to appreciate the use of sociological insights. The systematic connection which sociologists make between the individual and the social is an important expression of this. Understanding the role and significance of theory and evidence in the discipline is also a key element in subject knowledge and innovative thinking in Sociology.

## 2 Nature and extent of Sociology

2.1 Sociology is concerned with developing knowledge and understanding of human life and human interactions from a distinctively social perspective. It focuses on the social processes and relations that connect individuals, groups, and institutions across micro and macro contexts. When studying and researching the characteristics, understandings and social practices of individuals, it does so from the standpoint of their connection with others. This approach acknowledges that connections in the present are mediated by contexts arising from the effects of social relations in the past and modified by orientations to the future.

2.2 Sociology is a core social science discipline and, as such, it feeds into many other areas of study concerning the human world, and learns from them in the development and application of theoretical and methodological approaches to the search for social descriptions and explanations. It maintains a distinctive concern for the social dimensions of human interactions. Through analysis and research, it informs debates about society and contributes to discussions with other disciplines, public policy makers and in all forms of public media. Sociological research encompasses gathering primary research evidence, re-analysing evidence gathered by and critically scrutinising evidence claims of others, resulting in new knowledge and understanding. In this way, Sociology enables the experiences and perspectives of silenced or secretive groups to be known, shows the unintended consequences of social actions, and exposes the distortion of debates introduced by the politicised manipulation of research.

2.3 Sociology is not restricted to the study of contemporary societies. A sociological perspective is fruitfully employed in historical, cross-cultural and transnational comparative studies of changing forms of human life and engagement with physical and natural worlds. Sociology seeks to understand how and why societies, institutions and practices of all kinds are organised as they are, change over time, and the likely impact of this on life and the environment in the future.

2.4 Specialisms within Sociology necessarily change as its objects of study are themselves transformed. The discipline, its conceptual frameworks and research practices alter in relation to the diverse and changing social contexts in which sociologists work. This means that the disciplinary boundaries of Sociology and its relations to other disciplines shift, though its core is devoted to the distinctive perspective of 'the social' in human life of individual and collective interactions.

### **3 Subject knowledge and understanding**

3.1 This Subject Benchmark Statement applies to honours degrees in Sociology or combined honours degrees where Sociology comprises at least 50 per cent of the curriculum in the final or honours year. It will be for providers of higher education to decide if other degrees they provide fall within the scope of this Subject Benchmark Statement and to determine its applicability to honours degrees where Sociology forms less than 50 per cent of the curriculum in the final or honours years.

3.2 Details of the aims, objectives and content of individual programmes in Sociology will be found in the programme specifications or other documentation produced by higher education providers. However, it is likely that all programmes will address the following areas of sociological knowledge and understanding:

- key concepts and theoretical approaches that have been and are developing within Sociology
- the relationships between individuals, groups and social structures
- social diversity and inequalities
- the role of culturally organised processes in social life
- processes underpinning social change
- the distinctive character of Sociology in relation to other forms of understanding, such as its relation to other disciplines and to everyday explanations
- the relationship between analysis of evidence and sociological arguments
- a range of qualitative, quantitative and digital data sources, research strategies and methods of data collection and analysis
- the importance of ethical issues in all forms of sociological data collection, analysis and argumentation.

3.3 The specifications and criteria set out in this document are intended to provide a broad framework within which higher education providers can develop their own Sociology programmes. This Subject Benchmark Statement specifies the learning outcomes - the abilities, competencies and skills - that an honours graduate in Sociology will have acquired through their study of the discipline. The document does not specify mode of study or the learning methods by which the student is enabled to achieve the outcomes, as it is intended to be used in conjunction with higher education providers' own learning and teaching policies. The content of the curriculum through which the learning outcomes are developed will also be the responsibility of individual higher education providers.

## 4 Subject-specific skills and other skills

4.1 At Bachelor's degree level the range of discipline specific abilities that students would normally be expected to develop during their programme include:

- the ability to formulate and investigate sociologically informed questions
- competence in using major theoretical perspectives and concepts in Sociology, and their application to social life
- the capacity to identify, assess and analyse sources of evidence in building a sociological argument
- the ability to identify a range of qualitative and quantitative data sources, across different modalities (visual, oral, material or digital) of relevance to sociological enquiry
- the ability to identify a range of research strategies and methods and to comment on their relative advantages and disadvantages for sociological research
- the ability to plan and conduct sociological research using quantitative and qualitative data sources whether using secondary analysis of previous research, naturally occurring data or gathering new data
- the ability to understand and apply best ethical practice in sociological enquiry
- the ability to recognise the relevance of sociological knowledge to social, public and civic policy.

4.2 Students of Sociology are also expected to develop a wide range of skills and to develop abilities that are not unique to the discipline including: to undertake and present scholarly work orally and in writing; to work autonomously; to make independent judgements; and to work collaboratively in groups.

4.3 The study of Sociology enables students to acquire a number of cognitive abilities and skills. These may be acquired in a range of teaching and learning situations, enabling students to develop competence in:

- judging and evaluating evidence
- statistical techniques for interpreting and analysing numerical data
- appreciating the complexity and diversity of social contexts
- assessing the merits of competing theories and explanations
- gathering, retrieving, and synthesising information
- making reasoned and evidenced arguments
- interpreting evidence (numerical, visual, spoken and written)
- reflecting on their own accumulation of knowledge
- reflexivity about assumptions and the social processes and structures shaping forms of knowledge
- recognising forms of prejudice and abuses of power; developing arguments and evidence to challenge these.

4.4 Sociology students have access to the opportunity to develop further transferable skills in the following areas:

- learning and study skills
- written, visual and oral communication skills in a variety of contexts and to different types of audiences
- computer aided statistical and other quantitative techniques for analysing quantitative data
- computer aided techniques for storing, collating and analysing qualitative data

- information retrieval skills in relation to primary and secondary sources of information
- digital and IT skills
- skills of time planning and management
- independent working and collaborative group work skills
- the ability to assess and understand their own strengths and weaknesses, and to take action to improve and enhance their capacities.

## 5 Teaching, learning and assessment

5.1 The learning process and curriculum are designed in such a way as to provide evidence that the student has been given the opportunity to attain the required benchmark standards in all areas of performance. The assessments are designed to enable students to demonstrate that they have achieved an appropriate level in the required areas. How students are taught and assessed is determined by individual higher education providers. The following provides recommendations for teaching, learning and assessment methods:

### Teaching and learning

5.2 Students studying for an honours degree in Sociology have access to a range of supportive learning resources including:

- academic staff who are themselves engaged in scholarly activities
- a range of paper and electronic resources including data sets, policy documents, research texts, monographs and up-to-date journals
- computing resources including hardware, software and the necessary technical support.

5.3 Student learning is advanced by interaction with teachers and peers, both face-to-face and online, and by autonomous study. Teaching and learning activities can take the form of lectures, seminars, workshops, computing laboratory classes, tutorials, discussions, collaborative uses of diverse digital media, visits to external sites, and group and individual activities and projects.

5.4 There are a number of distinctive features of sociological knowledge which have implications for learning and teaching:

- As Sociology seeks to generalise or argue on the basis of evidence, it is neither purely deductive nor purely descriptive. Theorisation has to be disciplined by evidence, and interpretation has to be guided by the development and testing of theory. Consequently, students are given the opportunity to acquire capacities of thinking in both abstract and concrete terms, and the opportunity of relating one to the other. Much student learning is in the form of guided study where students will make use of a range of teaching materials and resources and learn to discriminate between a variety of sources in the public domain.
- Bodies of evidence often appear to be, and indeed may actually be, consistent with alternative interpretations embodied in rival theories. Sociology students are required to weigh up the relative strengths of alternatives according to such considerations as consistency with evidence, logic, fit with other supposedly established findings, and breadth of explanatory power. Learning situations provide students with the opportunity to rehearse their own ideas and to revise them. Students have the opportunity to gain experience of working together in groups and to practice a range of generic skills.
- Sociological knowledge is often contentious and may reflect current social, public and civic disputes. Accordingly, Sociology students need the opportunity to develop awareness of their own values and an appreciation of how alternative values impact upon rival interpretations of evidence.
- The disciplinary skills of designing, conducting and communicating high quality research are developed by opportunities to learn through practical experience including exercises as an aspect of research methods modules, supervised individual, group or class research projects and their presentation, and other forms and other forms of sociologically informed experiential learning such as accredited volunteering, work-placements or work-based learning.

## Assessment

5.5 How assessments are designed to enable students to demonstrate an appropriate level of achievement in the required areas will vary across programmes and is a matter for individual higher education providers. A wide range of forms of assessment and innovation in modes of assessment is consistent with the scope and dynamism of the discipline of Sociology. Students may be given opportunities to demonstrate their sociological skills and understanding in writing, orally and visually, individually and through collaborative group work and by practical demonstration of competence in aspects of social research addressing sociological questions.

5.6 Academic essays and exams remain an important mode of formative and summative assessment in many programmes but other modes of presenting work orally, visually and in writing are also used. For example, forms of writing such as book review, blog, research diary or wiki entries might be used to enable students to demonstrate skills in condensing and communicating sociological arguments to a range of audiences. Opportunities to present work orally or to develop visual materials such as poster displays or images accompanying an oral presentation may be assessed.

5.7 Practical exercises involving elements of doing and presenting research or the opportunity to conduct and communicate an entire research project are deployed to enable students to demonstrate skill in collecting, bringing together and presenting evidence and sociological argument. Practical exercises focus on aspects of the sociological research process: including in framing sociological questions, conducting secondary data analysis, in elements of the process of designing, gathering and analysing primary research to address sociological questions, and translating research for effective communication with different audiences. Practical exercises are simultaneously strengthening transferable skills such as confidence in reading, analysing and/or producing a table of numerical data, or confidence in giving an oral presentation, or collaborative group working while enabling the demonstration of discipline-specific research skills. In some degree programmes, accredited volunteering and work placements afford students opportunities for practicing sociological research skills, applying and sharing sociological knowledge and strengthening transferable skills.

## 6 Benchmark standards

### Introduction

6.1 The benchmark standards for Sociology may be achieved in a number of ways and are compatible with a diversity of curricula and a variety of modes of assessment. Thus it is not assumed that the benchmarks necessarily map onto specific modules or units within a programme of study.

6.2 This Subject Benchmark Statement has a double function: it enables the performance of individual students to be benchmarked in relation to specific learning outcomes; and it provides a framework within which whole programmes can be reviewed.

6.3 The threshold standard describes the minimally acceptable standards that students must achieve to secure a bachelor's degree with honours. It is necessary to demonstrate achievement in the stated areas of performance by the time the award is made.

### Benchmark standards for honours degrees

6.4 A graduate who has reached the bachelor's degree with honours threshold level should be able to demonstrate:

### Subject knowledge and understanding

6.5 On graduating with an honours degree in Sociology, students should be able to:

- i describe and examine a range of key concepts and theoretical approaches within Sociology, evaluate their application and creatively use concepts in analysing social phenomenon or addressing social problems
- ii provide an analytical account of social inequality addressing key dimensions and sites of power, inequality and stratification
- iii provide an analytical account of social diversity, addressing issues of identity, difference, and their relationship to inequality and power
- iv analyse social processes shaping individuals, groups, social practices, social institutions and social structures
- v provide an analytical account of the relationship between social action and social structure
- vi provide an analytical account of the social shaping of identity and difference
- vii examine the processes that underpin social change, conflict and social stability
- viii use specialist knowledge of one or more sub-topics within Sociology to construct a sociological argument
- ix examine a range of data sources, research strategies and quantitative and qualitative methods and assess the appropriateness of their use
- x understand and evaluate the use of comparison in Sociology either looking diachronically across time or synchronically across context
- xi evaluate the relationship between sociological arguments and evidence
- xii analyse ways in which Sociology can be distinguished from other forms of understanding and explanation
- xiii understand ways that sociological knowledge can be used across a variety of professional contexts - public, private, and third sector organisations, both national and international.



## **Discipline-specific skills**

- 6.6 On graduating with an honours degree in Sociology, students should be able to:
- i construct appropriate sociologically informed questions and pathways to answers
  - ii summarise and explain the findings of empirical sociological research, including a critical assessment of the methodological frameworks used
  - iii select and use appropriate research tools for collection and analysis of quantitative and qualitative data including software and basic statistical and interpretative procedures
  - iv investigate sociologically informed explanations
  - v analyse the ethical implications of social research in a variety of applied research settings
  - vi discuss sociological topics with appreciation of theory, evidence and relevance to current debates and present the conclusions in a variety of appropriate sociological formats suitable for different audiences
  - vii identify and comment on the value of sociological work for specific organisations or with regard to social, public and civic policy issues.

## **Cognitive abilities and skills**

- 6.7 On graduating with an honours degree in Sociology, students should be able to:
- i assess the merits of competing explanations
  - ii draw on evidence to evaluate competing explanations
  - iii identify and construct evidence from a range of sources
  - iv demonstrate an ability to synthesise bodies of evidence and arguments
  - v evaluate competing explanations and draw reasoned conclusions
  - vi discuss and present ideas and interpretations with others in a clear and reasoned way
  - vii assess and analyse the ethical implications of research and enquiry
  - viii demonstrate skills in information gathering, analysis, communication and presentation
  - ix work independently and manage their time
  - x demonstrate some ability to plan and develop an independent project with a clear outcome
  - xi reflexively question assumptions which are taken for granted.

## 7 Employability

7.1 Sociology graduates are equipped with generic and transferable skills, which include the ability to research, collect and analyse data, use a range of software, conduct comparative and policy analysis, administer, organise, plan and time manage, write and edit, present evidence and argument, and question and debate.

7.2 Sociology graduates gain subject-specific capacities that are valuable to employers such as an understanding of social processes, social contexts, social diversity and the possibilities of innovation and social change. They can draw on their discipline to evaluate different ways of working in groups, teams and institutions and to work with the existing structures. They have the capacity to innovate and constructively question taken for granted assumptions about how things are done. They are equipped to understand social and cultural diversity and factors which perpetuate inequalities and exclusion versus promoting equality and inclusion. Their understanding of the issues around equality and discrimination can be applied with reference to gender, sexuality, social class, race, ethnicity, religion, age and disability. Sociological knowledge can assist with developing institutional change, including the creation of innovative and equitable forms of organisational collaboration, linking creativity, justice and productivity in the work place. Sociological skills are of relevance across public and private sectors. Examples of use of sociological skills applied in the private sector include user experience studies, design of ethnography and user-centred design in ICT and new social media.

7.3 Graduates in Sociology enter a variety of professions including within the social services, local and national government and the civil service, youth work, lecturing and teaching, career guidance, research, journalism, third sector advocacy, think tanks, policy development, police and probation services, human resource management, legal services, marketing and advertising, ICT development, business and finance, publishing, health services, health promotion and public health, ecology and environmental campaigning, and international development. A degree in Sociology enables graduates to make a unique contribution to specialised fields. For example, the sociological study of organisations helps graduates think constructively about processes within many work places and specialist topics such as the sociology of health and illness or the sociology of education give Sociology graduates specialist knowledge of relevance to employment in those areas, the health services and education respectively. In the civil service, specialist skills in framing questions, capacity for innovation, and communication with diverse audiences, coupled with the range of sociological enquiry helps to equip Sociology graduates for the wide portfolio of the service and the practice of moving round departments.

7.4 The skills that Sociology graduates develop through evidence and research-based investigative approaches involve rigorous, creative, and innovative techniques of discovery and data analysis. Sociology encourages practice in framing insightful questions and planning pathways to answers, critically reflecting on the ethics of research, diligent and imaginative techniques of collection, collation, management and analysis of data, effective communication of research to different audiences and drawing out possible solutions or possibilities of change. All of these capacities fruitfully contribute to employment in the majority of contemporary organisations and institutions. A grounding in social theory and its practical application through methods of conducting social research attunes Sociology graduates to the process of constructing knowledge of value to a range of audiences. They are skilled in formulating questions, identifying, gathering, evaluating and synthesising evidence, constructing reasoned argument and identifying possible routes to innovation and change. Their knowledge of the ethical issues in conducting research and good practice in gathering evidence includes methods ranging from face-to-face interviews to virtual communication through digital means, as well as techniques of analysing qualitative and quantitative data.

Some graduates may have specialised in particular theories or techniques of gathering and analysing data and all graduates will be able to draw on specialist knowledge of particular topics. Some will already have experience of volunteering, work placements or activism that has combined their sociological skills and knowledge with practical situations.

7.5 The specialist knowledge of Sociology also enhances students' capacities for a range of career and employment areas/sectors that focus on and address social issues (for example poverty, equality and diversity and so on), further education (including professional study and degrees) as well as providing important transferable knowledge and skills for both public and private sector work (for example Graduate Employment). The following table is an indicative list of specialist topics; these are ordered alphabetically and do not represent all specialist areas nor would all of these normally be taught in any one programme.

Ageing	Agriculture
Aid/Development	Alcohol-Drug use
Animals/Human-Animal Relationships	Bodies/Embodiment/the Body Childhood
Cities/Urban sociology	Citizenship
Climate Change	Consumption
Criminology/Crime and Deviance	Cultural Difference
Culture	Death
Demography	Digital/Internet
Disability	Economic Sociology/Finance
Education	Emotions
Environment	Family/Intimate Relationships/Personal life
Food	Gender
Globalisation	Happiness
Health/Medical Sociology	Historical Sociology
Human Rights Inequalities	Law/Socio-legal studies
Leisure	Life-Course
Mass Media	Mobility/Migration/Transnational Relationships
Older Age	Organisations
Peace-making	Popular Culture
Post-Conflict Transitions	Poverty
Power	Race and Ethnicity
Religion	Rural Sociology
Science/Science and Technology Studies	Sexualities
Social Change	Social Conflict and Cohesion
Social Mobility	Social Movements
Social Policy	Sport
Stratification	Sustainability
Technology	Terrorism
The Body	The State/State Formation and Transition
Transport	Violence
War/Armed Forces	Youth
Youth Culture	

Note also some Sociology departments have staff who are specialists in particular areas of the globe and offer one or more modules on the sociology of a particular nation or region.

## **Appendix: Membership of the benchmarking and review groups for the Subject Benchmark Statement for Sociology**

### **Membership of the review group for the Subject Benchmark Statement for Sociology (2015-16)**

Dr Jason Annetts	Abertay University
Professor William Housley	Cardiff University
Professor Lynn Jamieson (Chair)	The British Sociological Association and University of Edinburgh
Professor Pauline Leonard	University of Southampton
Professor Daniel Neyland	Goldsmiths, University of London
Dr Cassie Ogden	University of Chester
Professor John Scott CBE	Independent
Professor Emerita E. Stina Lyon	London South Bank University
Dr Aaron Winter	University of East London

#### **Employer representative**

Paul Bradshaw	ScotCen Social Research
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#### **Student reader**

Kelly Pilgrim	Edge Hill University
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#### **QAA officer**

Dr Tim P Burton	Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education
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## **Membership of the review group for the Subject Benchmark Statement for Sociology (2007)**

Details provided below are as published in the second edition of the Subject Benchmark Statement.

Professor J P Eade	Roehampton University
Professor D W Jary	The Open University
Professor E S Lyon	London South Bank University
Professor R J Mears (Chair)	Bath Spa University
J Mudd (Secretary)	The British Sociological Association

## **Membership of the original benchmark statement group for Sociology (2002)**

Details below are as published in the original Subject Benchmark Statement for Sociology.

Professor P A Abbott (Chair)	University of Teesside
Professor J Bailey	Kingston University
Dr J Chandler	University of Plymouth
Dr S Delamont	Cardiff University
J P Gubbay	University of East Anglia
Dr L H Jamieson	University of Edinburgh
Dr M Leonard	Queen's University of Belfast
E S Lyon	South Bank University
Dr R J Mears	Bath Spa University College
C Middleton	University of Sheffield
L Murphy	Deloitte and Touche
Professor J P Scott	University of Essex
Dr H A Thomas	University of Surrey
Professor F Webster	University of Birmingham
J Mudd (Secretary)	The British Sociological Association

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