Programme Specification

Programme award and title:
Bachelor of Arts in Sociology (L300)
Bachelor of Arts Honours in Sociology and Social Policy (L431)

UCAS code:
L300 and L431

SCQF Qualification Level: 7-10
SCQF Credit Value: 352 (for L300)
484 (for L431)

Educational aims of the programme:
Concise (e.g. a few sentences), general statement of aims and broad purposes of the programme

- Sociology provision at the University of Stirling aims to develop the learner’s interest in and knowledge of Sociology. In view of the skills which are integral to their study, Sociology may usefully be pursued along with many other academic subjects. Combined Honours programmes have been developed through student demand and where cognate subjects show commonality of focus and approach, thereby reinforcing and complementing each other’s strengths. The aim is to provide students with opportunities to follow a single integrated programme, combined subject programmes, or vocationally oriented programmes of studies which are relevant to their particular interests and needs. The Single Honours Programme in Sociology and Social Policy aims to provide a grounding in the two subjects through core modules, whilst allowing specialisation through the choice of optional modules and the dissertation. The Programme also aims to promote the teaching and learning of transferable, communication, self-management, interpersonal and academic skills.

Intended programme learning outcomes:
Outline (e.g. one or two paragraphs) of what the student will know, understand and be able to do as a result of their learning, expressed in the categories below. Please consider the contribution made to the student’s personal development planning (PDP) and future employability.

Knowledge and understanding
- understanding of key concepts, theoretical approaches and values in Sociology
- ability to examine the relevance of sociological work to issues of social, public and civic policy
- development of a sociological imagination which can be applied to a variety of current social issues, and which can generate sociologically informed questions
- ability to understand and apply a comparative perspective across time and space
- awareness of social differentiation and the range of explanations for it
- understanding of the interconnection between the individual and society, and of social relations as the products of specific historical processes
- understanding the context and implications of the formulation of a range of social policies
- ability to assess the strengths and weaknesses of competing explanations for social phenomena
- ability to select an appropriate strategy to define, research and analyse social issues, using appropriate evidence
- ability to utilise critical and analytical skills in addressing sociological issues

Subject-specific skills and other attributes
- literacy and numeracy
- critical and analytical skills
- library skills
- problem solving
- creativity
- research skills
- information technology (IT) skills

Generic skills (e.g. information skills, communication skills, critical, analytical and problem-solving abilities) and other attributes
- Communication Skills:

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- communication in group work
- making class presentations
- essay writing
- research report writing

Self-Management Skills:
- planning
- applying study skills
- organising academic work
- working under pressure
- time management
- meeting deadlines

Interpersonal Skills:
- interaction in group work
- leadership
- listening
- sensitivity

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<th>Learning, teaching and assessment strategies:</th>
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<td>Outline (e.g. one or two paragraphs) on overall approach taken to develop and assess learning outcomes, including any distinctive features</td>
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<td>- There is a policy of periodic assessment in the Department of Applied Social Science, which allows students to pass through the stages of the degree on the basis of assessment of their work over a range of modules, and in a variety of assessed tasks. Tasks are designed to aid progressive development of skills. Feedback is provided to students on all aspects of their performance. It aims to offer advice on and support for improvement, as well as evaluation. Evidence of student achievement appears in their work, and in external examiners’ reports and in the employability of graduates.</td>
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<td>- First year: In the first year of the degree, students’ assessed work consists of essays and short, structured, worksheet submissions, which draw on preparatory reading and report on group discussion and tasks completed during the workshop. The worksheets are designed to consolidate and reflect upon reading and discussion, and to encourage analytical skills. In first semester, a degree of self-assessment is included in the worksheets, to encourage students to reflect on their own work. At this stage in the degree, the essay work receives extensive support. Students are also introduced to research skills in the first semester, through a lecture and workshop session. Research skills are assessed via worksheets. Through the workshops students are introduced to discussion groups, which are an important basis of learning in the Department. The discussions themselves are not assessed, as this is felt to exert undue pressure, and to detract from the need for students to become accustomed to and confident in class discussion, and to work with the ground rules for discussion which are given in the Sociology, Social Policy and Criminology Undergraduate Student Handbook. Examinations at first year level test students’ grasp of the substantive content of modules, and their ability to marshal arguments and empirical material into coherent form within time constraints.</td>
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<td>- Second year: In second year, assessment of essay work continues, and essays are longer (2000 words). Students are encouraged to practise the essay writing skills introduced in first year, developing their powers of critical analysis, particularly in relation to the more theoretical material in the two core modules. Group discussions are not formally assessed, but students’ participation is recorded and forms the basis of comment on the undergraduate progress report form. Worksheets are used in the optional module entitled Scottish Society, again to encourage students to consolidate and reflect upon the work completed in workshop sessions; the maintenance of such a worksheet format is seen as particularly appropriate at this early stage, when students may not feel confident with their work. Examinations at second year level test students’ grasp of the course material, and their presentational and analytical skills, and there is an emphasis on broadly based conceptual work.</td>
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<td>- Third year: The third year core assessments emphasise research skills, and take several forms. Examinations enable students to try out their skills, and are preceded by revision workshops, designed to clarify problems. Assignments are assessed on group and individual bases; group work builds on the experience of discussion groups and workshops acquired earlier in the programme, now being formally assessed for the first time, and the individual work maintains the focus on critical, analytical and writing skills. The assessments involve the range of research skills covered in the modules, which are both quantitative and qualitative, and students are encouraged to link their methods work with their existing theoretical and empirical knowledge. Throughout the third year core modules, students are encouraged to reflect on their work, engaging in self-assessment, which encourages good research practice and asks questions such as ‘in the light of your experience of the work, how would you now do it differently?’</td>
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- Fourth year: The fourth year core programme focuses on the research process, synthesising further theoretical, methodological and empirical work in the Honours Seminar, and supporting students in their own research projects through the dissertation workshops and individual supervision. In the Honours seminar, lecturers observe student participation and report on it at the end of each semester. Each student acts as discussant for their group once each semester. In Autumn, discussants receive written feedback on their presentation; in Spring, the presentation is formally assessed. Formal assessment is via two essays, one presentation and an examination. The essay topics direct students towards the required synthesis of work. The examination topics (not questions) are announced in advance to allow the examination to emphasise skills in the development of an argument, not recall tasks, and there is a strong emphasis in the examination, in which students spend two hours on one question, on the use of advanced critical skills. In the dissertation, students conduct an original piece of research on a topic of their own choice. Generally, dissertations involve field research, although some use secondary analysis. The work is intended to give practice in and demonstrate achievement of research skills, their application, and their contextualisation in terms of theoretical approaches and available literature. Formal assessment, in relation to these criteria, is carried out at dissertation submission, during the final semester.

- Optional modules: The substantive optional modules which students take in third and fourth year are generally assessed by a combination of essay work and examination, although other methods of assessment may also be used for modules with appropriate aims. In general, options aim to help students to develop the core skills and themes in relation to a particular area of the subject, and to demonstrate these skills through assessment via essay and end of module (i.e. end of semester) examination. Lecturers running options comment on students’ contributions to class discussions on the undergraduate progress report forms, maintaining the focus on and the monitoring and recording of students’ performance in this area, without formally assessing them.

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<th>Professional/statutory body accreditation or recognition:</th>
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**Further details:**

- Entry requirements: [http://www.external.stir.ac.uk/undergrad/entry_reqs/index.php](http://www.external.stir.ac.uk/undergrad/entry_reqs/index.php)
- Programme structure: [http://www.calendar.stir.ac.uk/](http://www.calendar.stir.ac.uk/)
- Relevant Subject Benchmark statement: [http://www.qaa.ac.uk/academicinfrastructure/benchmark/default.asp](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/academicinfrastructure/benchmark/default.asp)
- Introduction/revision date: October 2006