Programme Specification

Queen Margaret University

EDINBURGH

Where appropriate outcome statements have be referenced to the appropriate Benchmarking Statement **(BS)**

1	**Awarding Institution**	Queen Margaret University
2	**Teaching Institution**	Queen Margaret University
3	**Final Award**	BSc (Hons)
4	**Subsidiary exit awards**	Cert HE; Dip HE
5	**Programme Title**	BSc (Hons) Public Sociology
6	**UCAS code**	
7	**SCQF Level**	10
8	**Mode of delivery and duration**	4 years Full time
9	**Date of validation/review**	16 May 2014

10. Educational Aims of the programme

The aims of the B.Sc. (Hons) Public Sociology award are to:

- Enable students to recognise and appreciate the epistemological foundations of Sociology and equip students with an appreciation of its rich theoretical legacy and long research tradition.

- Engender a sense of confidence amongst students to critically assess the utility of sociological knowledge for interpreting and problematising a range of contemporary issues in a wide range of public contexts.

- Enable students to develop an acute sense of the Sociologist's role in making sense of, critiquing and addressing a wide range of public issues and concerns

- Recognise the particular style, applications and utility of a distinctively Public Sociology.

- Create a learning and teaching culture where students can appropriate for themselves as individuals and as a cohort the breadth and depth of contemporary sociological knowledge and research appropriate to Honours degree level.

- Encourage and enable students to realise their academic, intellectual and personal development potential for life after graduation through the provision of structured opportunities for academic learning and personal 'soft' skills backed up by structured pastoral support.

- Provide a curriculum which acknowledges and encourages drawing upon the diversity of student backgrounds, expectations and experiences as part of the appropriation of the sociological imagination and the contemporary relevance of 'public' Sociology for addressing contemporary social problems.

11. Benchmark statements/professional and statutory body requirements covered by the programme

Quality Assurance Agency Benchmarks for Sociology
http://www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Documents/Sociology07.pdf

Quality Assurance Agency Benchmarks for Psychology
http://www.qaa.ac.uk/academicinfrastructure/benchmark/statements/Psychology07.pdf

12. Learning Outcomes of the Programme

On completion of the award, students should be able to achieve the following learning outcomes:

A. Knowledge and understanding

On completion of this award, students should be able to:

1. Demonstrate an analytical and critical understanding of the epistemological foundations of Sociology as an academic discipline.

2. To identify the historical origins, development and limitations of the academic study of Sociology.

3. Demonstrate detailed and contemporary knowledge and understanding in relation to a number of specialist areas of Sociology.
4. Offer critical comment on the meaning and utility of Public Sociology for engaging in a wide range of cultural, economic, political and social debates in contemporary societies.

5. Through independent scholarly activity, synthesise and critically evaluate a wide range of sociological theories, theorists, concepts and practices for a range of issues and public contexts.

B. Intellectual (thinking) skills

On completion of this award, students should be able to:

1. Demonstrate competence in the critique of published sociological research in relation to conceptual and methodological considerations.

2. Make informed, comparative, critical judgements and evaluations of a range of sociological approaches to a range of contemporary and emerging public issues.

3. Evaluate the utility of a range of epistemological and methodological perspectives in interrogating and understanding and challenging issues of social / public significance.

4. Employ evidence-based, comparative reasoning and examine practical, theoretical and ethical issues associated with the use of different methodologies, paradigms and methods of analysis in sociological research.
5. Think reflexively about the value of sociological knowledge for a wide range of issues of public concern.

C. Practical skills

On completion of this award, students should be able to:

1. Demonstrate competence in the presentation and interpretation of qualitative and quantitative data.

2. Demonstrate appropriate skills for effective participation in and leading of academic debate and discussion.

3. Demonstrate in-depth understanding of ethical issues and current codes of ethics and research conduct.

4. Make meaningful connections between academic Sociology and its relevance for the lives of the communities and publics who form the subject matter of the discipline.

5. Generate, analyse, synthesise, interpret and evaluate qualitative and quantitative research data.

D. Transferable skills

On completion of this award, students should be able to:

1. Demonstrate competence in synthesising relevant evidence in the development of coherent and systematic arguments.

2. Demonstrate ability to initiate, organise and evaluate studies and research / knowledge claims, both independently and collaboratively.

3. Implement problem-solving skills in a variety of theoretical and practical situations.

4. Demonstrate appropriate communication and leadership skills in a variety of contexts.

5. Evidence effective personal planning and project management skills.

13. Teaching, learning & assessment strategies

To facilitate independent learners it is necessary to do more than cover the breadth and depth of the academic disciplines involved. Learning how to independently acquire, utilise and evaluate knowledge and then apply it to contexts not contained within any existing literature is a key feature of higher education in general and these three programmes in particular. Essentially students must learn about and develop their own learning and the three programmes presented here seek to embody this principle by including issues surrounding the *process* of learning in the content of the taught curriculum.

Lectures will be used to provide a foundation of knowledge by stimulating student interest and highlighting significant features of the curriculum and the Sociology and Psychology literature. Additionally, this activity will formally address theoretical accounts of learning, memory and the organisation of knowledge in an explicit effort to support knowledge development. Further enhancement will be provided by an early introduction to scientific enquiry and of the strengths and limitations of the various methodological approaches within selected discipline areas.

This early didactic approach to learning and teaching, with its emphasis upon information transmission, provides a supportive framework for knowledge development in the early stages of Higher Education. However, if it used as the sole approach, experience and student SSCC feedback teaches us that it may engender passivity, dependency and disengagement among some students and so impact negatively upon the student learning experience and their development of personal and inter-personal skills that are needed after graduation in order to successfully compete in the occupational landscape.

The review teams, then, concluded that in addition to the didactic approach to learning and teaching, students also need to know how to access and acquire knowledge for themselves, whether by locating existing knowledge or discovering new knowledge. While there is a strong emphasis upon these skills in the level 1 semester 1 module *Introduction to Academia*, the new emphasis upon EBL and summative assessments involving presentations has been done with a view to enhancing student learning. We also recognise the importance of longitudinal induction and a programme of *longitudinal induction* provided by Psychology will take place in the core modules so that joint and single honours Sociology students will also access this support in their first year and second year (semester 1) of academic life and so in the new programme some of the content taught in level 1's *Skills for Psychologists* has been moved to level 2's *Psychological Literacy*.
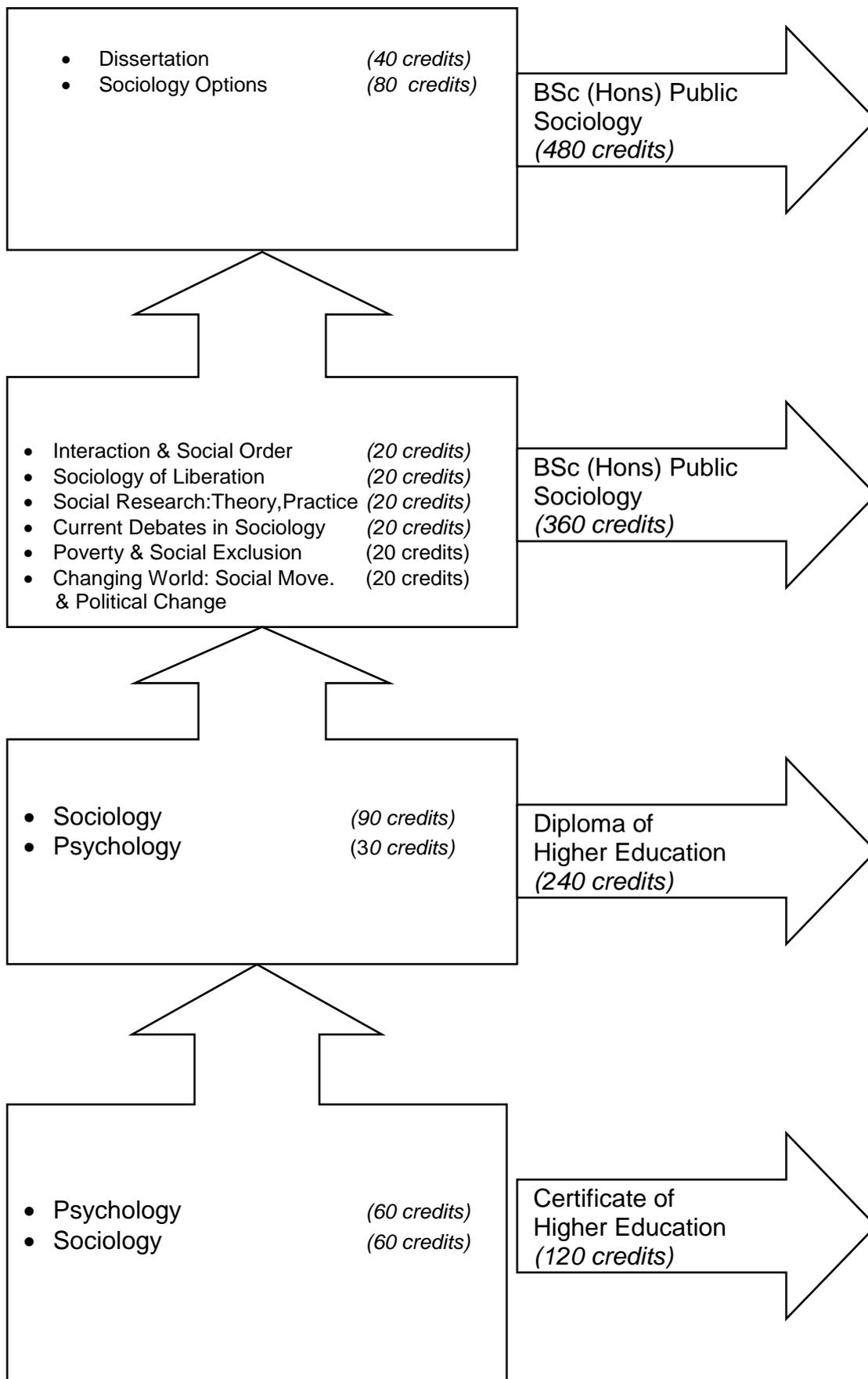
This new programme is designed to provide opportunities to develop skills in information retrieval, practical investigation, data collection and analysis across the first two years, as is reflected in the implementation of the two new Psychology modules Foundations of Psychology and Psychological Literacy. In addition, there will be a focus upon student-centred learning where students, for example, must choose their essay topic in Introduction to Academia: the Sociological Imagination. Considerable effort is made to ensure that the planning emphasis is not on learning experience alone, but also on what the student *does* with the learning experience and so the aim is to encourage students to become autonomous learners.

Having acquired knowledge, it is important for students to be able to communicate effectively with others through a variety of forms. These might include academic essays, scientific reports, oral and poster presentations but above all seminar work. It is unsurprising, therefore, that all such forms of communication feature in the range of assessments used in the programmes. In order that the assessment process might contribute with greater effect to the learning programme, students are formally introduced to the marking criteria for each assessment mode and level. Consequently, students and staff will share an understanding of how performance is to be evaluated. It is considered that a key element of successful assessment is the ability of students to reflect upon their own performance - of leading in group presentations for example. To this end, formal tuition will be given in the principles and practice of self-assessment and peer assessment with a view to incorporating these in the formal curriculum among a range of other formative assessments. In this way, it is hoped that the objectives and true value of assessment may become better understood by students and consequently facilitate the development of more reflective, critically minded, autonomous graduates. The introduction of discussion and reading workshops and Enquiry Based Learning[1] at level 2 (*Social Inquiry: Philosophy & Design* and *Production & Consumption of Culture* respectively) brings a new dimension to the assessment process, and the group work monitoring process allows for self- and peer-reflection, as well as ensuring a formal structure for monitoring individual contribution to group work and debates.

As mentioned in proposed action point 1, the Sociology team has adopted a clear 2 stage approach to assessment and is piloting a new assessment submission sheet in some modules that requires the student to specify which particular areas they would like their marker to address when giving feedback.

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[1] The Centre of Excellence in Enquiry-based Learning at the University of Manchester has described EBL as 'an environment in which learning is driven by a process of enquiry owned by the student. The tutor establishes the task and facilitates the process, but the students pursue their own lines of enquiry, draw on their existing knowledge and identify the consequent learning needs. They seek out relevant evidence and take responsibility for analysing and presenting this appropriately, either as part of a group or as an individual supported by others. They are thus engaged as partners in learning.'

14. Programme structures and features, curriculum units (modules), credits and award requirements (including any periods of placement)

- Dissertation _(40 credits)_
- Sociology Options _(80 credits)_

BSc (Hons) Public Sociology
(480 credits)

- Interaction & Social Order _(20 credits)_
- Sociology of Liberation _(20 credits)_
- Social Research:Theory,Practice _(20 credits)_
- Current Debates in Sociology _(20 credits)_
- Poverty & Social Exclusion (20 credits)
- Changing World: Social Move. (20 credits)
  & Political Change

BSc (Hons) Public Sociology
(360 credits)

- Sociology _(90 credits)_
- Psychology _(30 credits)_

Diploma of Higher Education
(240 credits)

- Psychology _(60 credits)_
- Sociology _(60 credits)_

Certificate of Higher Education
(120 credits)

15. Criteria for admission

The entrance requirements stated below are guidelines rather than rules. Admissions Tutors may use their discretion to make offers to applicants who do not meet the stated requirements, provided there is evidence to suggest a reasonable chance of success on the student's chosen award.

Entrance Requirements for the B.Sc. (Hons) Public Sociology

- o Highers/A-levels

  - ▪ Applicants to the B.Sc. Public Sociology award will typically have 180-216 UCAS tariff points, approximating to BBB or BBCC grades at Highers level and CCD at A-level.

  - ▪ In addition, applicants must normally have passes in English and Mathematics at Standard Grade or GCSE. In the absence of such passes, alternative evidence of literacy and numeracy will be considered by Admissions Tutors.

  - ▪ Applicants applying under the Lothians Equal Access Programme for Schools (LEAPS) Scheme may offer the results of LEAPS Summer School study to supplement grades attained in Highers. Applicants from similar schemes in other localities aimed at addressing disadvantage in secondary education will be treated similarly.

- o Other qualifications

  - ▪ Attainment of a Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) Higher National Certificate (HNC) award, or an Advanced General National Vocational Qualification (AGNVQ), or successful completion to an appropriate standard of a recognised Access programme, will normally be accepted for entry into level 1, provided it contains evidence of numeracy to the level of the SQA module Core Mathematics 4 or equivalent.

Students who have attained an SQA Higher National Certificate (HNC) award in Social Sciences may be considered for entry into level 1 while attainment of an SQA Higher National Diploma (HND) award in Social Sciences may be permitted advanced entry on the course, through discussions with the Admissions Tutor. Advanced entry by one year may be considered for each of the named Higher National awards.

16. Support for students and their learning

Queen Margaret University is firmly committed to the Widening Access to Higher Education and TeachAbility agendas, which and is committed widening access to education for students with a variety of requirements. With reference to the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act (SENDA, 2001) the School of Arts, Social Sciences and Management sought to foster accessibility at all levels of procedure (admissions, learning, teaching and assessment).

Eligibility to study within the School is dealt with in strict adherence to the University Disability policy and specific Division recommendations, in close contact with Student Services and other centralised support systems, where required. Eligibility decisions are made by the Division on the basis of academic ability only.

Where an applicants required adjustments are deemed to be "unreasonable" or where governing bodies place restrictions on procedure, the situation is discussed with all parties in full, and students are counselled as to their options, or referred onto internal or external services for support or advice. Often applicants can be offered a place on an adjusted curriculum.

An Individual Learning Plan (ILP) is developed for all students presenting with additional requirements. This is done either centrally (Student Services) or by Academic Disabled Students Co-

ordinator (ADSC) in every Division. ILP adjustments range from provision of particular equipment (for example, computers for students with dyslexia), to specific help with presentations, or to the provision of proof readers (organised centrally). The majority of students with ILPs are eligible for financial support from their local funding bodies, and are encouraged to apply for this funding under the guidance of the University Disability Advisor (Student Services).

17. Quality Assurance arrangements

A range of mechanisms and practices, both formal and informal, are utilised by the programme team to monitor and enhance the standards and quality of teaching and learning.

In relation to standards due regard is taken of Subject benchmarking statements, the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) and the QMU guidelines on the general educational aims of undergraduate awards. External Examiners provide a key external point of reference with knowledge and experience of similar courses across a range of Institutions of Higher Education. In a similar manner staff with external examining and review experience also provide reference points, as do those with professional body involvement.

The QAA Enhancement Themes initiative serves as a focus for discussion on developments in programme design and delivery. Sociology staff are also fortunate in having a quality resource in the activities and publications of Higher Education Academy Psychology and C-SAP (Sociology, Anthropology & Politics).

The programme team are committed to implementing the principles articulated in the Institution's QELTA strategy.

The formal mechanisms for the collation and processing of, and issues raised in the Annual Programme Monitoring Reports will be adopted and acted upon. Senior staff in the School are keen to promote staff involvement in the development, monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning initiatives.