

University of Cambridge: Programme Specifications

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POLITICS, PSYCHOLOGY AND SOCIOLOGY TRIPOS SOCIAL AND POLITICAL SCIENCES TRIPOS

1	Awarding body	University of Cambridge
2	Teaching institution	University of Cambridge
3	Accreditation details	None
4	Name of final award	Bachelor of Arts
5	Programme title	Politics, Psychology and Sociology Tripos, formerly known as the Social and Political Sciences Tripos. The first degrees to graduate with the PPS will be in 2011
6	UCAS code	LL32
7	JACS code(s)	L300, L200, C800
8	Relevant QAA benchmark statement(s)	Sociology Politics and International Relations Psychology
9	Qualifications framework level	6 (Honours)
10	Date specification produced/ last revised	May 2010
11	Date specification last reviewed	October 2009/March 2008

Educational Aims of the Programme

The Faculty of Politics, Psychology, Sociology, and International Studies is the principal institution providing teaching in Sociology, Social and Developmental Psychology and Politics within the University of Cambridge at the undergraduate and postgraduate levels. It also draws upon the resources of several other Departments and Faculties in the University in order to optimize its teaching programme, including History, Archaeology and Anthropology, Oriental Studies, Education, Experimental Psychology, Criminology and International Studies, Computer Science, and from 2010 Geography.

The Tripos consists of a Part I, following which students choose one of four schemes of study through Parts IIA and IIB: Sociology, Social Psychology, Politics, or Sociology and Social Psychology. (Sociology can also be combined with Politics.) The philosophy of this structure is that the first year is multidisciplinary, giving students a basis on which to choose a disciplinary focus in Part II. Part IIA is disciplinary, providing a coherent disciplinary formation. In Part IIB students can continue to focus on their chosen disciplines or can widen their studies from a range of disciplinary and interdisciplinary options. In this way the Tripos offers, over a three-year period, disciplinary depth and range, progression in whichever disciplines are chosen as a focus, and the choice in the third year to explore both advanced research-led papers in the core

disciplines and advanced options based on the interdisciplinary perspectives at the forefront of much contemporary social scientific research.

Course Aims:

Overall

- to provide an excellent education in, and a critical appreciation of, Sociology, Social and Developmental Psychology, Politics and International Studies and associated sub-disciplines at the undergraduate level
- to maintain the highest academic standards and to keep open the channels between current research directions and curriculum design
- to provide a stimulating environment in which students can realise their intellectual potential
- to provide, in collaboration with the Colleges, an integrated structure of learning and teaching which can be tailored to the needs of individual students
- to continue to attract outstanding students from varied social backgrounds, and to help them develop a wide range of intellectual abilities, writing, research and critical skills, and other qualities which will enable them to make a significant contribution in their chosen careers and walks of life, including further academic studies

In the Tripos Programme

- to provide an appropriate balance of disciplinary specialisation and depth, and interdisciplinary breadth
- to enable students in each successive year to build on the knowledge and skills acquired in previous years, so as to achieve progression in their studies
- to enable students to acquire skills to write and produce both short and long documents using word-processors and other research and productive tools including internet resources
- for those students following PPS Part II in one year: to provide an education in the social sciences which covers a mixture of subject matter appropriate to each student

Course Structure and Outcomes:

Part I (the 1st year)

In Part I students take three or two compulsory papers, from Politics (Introduction to politics: the analysis of modern politics, Paper 1), Sociology (Introduction to sociology: modern societies, Paper 2), and Social Psychology (Introduction to psychology: society, interaction and the individual, Paper 3).

Students a choice of one further paper or two further papers (if they have chosen two compulsory papers. Most will opt for the 'traditional' PPS quartet and choose the paper on Social Anthropology (Human Societies: The Comparative Perspective, now renumbered to Paper 8). However, for students with clear disciplinary interests, other papers will be available: Archaeology (The development of human societies, Paper 6), Bioanthropology (Humans in biological perspective, Paper 7), Computer Science (Introduction to computer science, Paper 9), Economics (British Economic History, Paper 10), Child development and learning (Language, communication and literacy, Paper 11).

From 2010 four more papers will be available: Politics (International Relations I, Paper 5), and Geography (Human Geography I, II, and III, Paper 12, Paper 13 and Paper 14 respectively). Each paper gives an introduction to the nature, scope and core themes of the discipline at issue.

For most students, the course is assessed by four written examination papers. Students opting for the Language, Communication and Literacy papers will also be required to complete assessed coursework.

On completion of Part I students should have acquired:

1. An understanding of a range of arguments about the modern state, about modern democratic practice, and criticisms of and alternatives to this practice;
2. A basic knowledge of classical social theory, of key concepts in sociology and of selected institutions of modern societies;
3. An understanding of key concepts for the analysis of social and developmental psychological processes, together with a basic appreciation of the methods that can be used to research these processes;
4. An ability to read and assess a range of standard literatures, to develop their own arguments in response to these literatures, to express these arguments on paper and to defend them in discussion; and
5. A basis on which they can make an informed choice of subjects to be followed in Part II.

And one of the following

6. A basic knowledge of the development of humanity at three nested geographical scales: the world, Europe and the Cambridge region;
7. A basic knowledge of biological anthropology, and its major subject areas: molecular basis of life, evolutionary theory, the primate biological and behavioural background to human evolution, the fossil record of the human lineage, ecology and adaptations of modern peoples in the context of their health, disease and patterns of growth, as well as human genetic diversity, behavioural genetics and gene-environment interactions;
8. A basic knowledge of the aims, scope, theory and methods of Social Anthropology as the description, analysis and comparative study of human society and culture;
9. A knowledge of the basic principles of programming and the principles of data structures and algorithms, focusing on problem-solving, software engineering and related issues;
10. A knowledge of the key conceptual tools and empirical findings relevant to understanding the historical development of the British economy from 1750 to 1939; or
11. A basic knowledge of a range of issues associated with children's development and learning, with particular emphasis on the way different cultural formations affect the acquisition of language and literacy and the power inflected within the processes of communication (written, oral and non-verbal), as this impacts on children, and the way 'literacy' may be understood within a range of contexts

Part IIA (the 2nd year)

The objective of Part IIA is to impart knowledge at an intermediary level of the discipline or disciplines chosen by students. In Part IIA students therefore take three papers related to the discipline or disciplines they have chosen as their focus: Politics (Scheme (a)), Social Psychology (known as 'Psychology within the Social Sciences', Scheme (b)), Sociology (Scheme (c)), or Sociology and Social Psychology (Scheme (d)). Students can also combine Sociology and Politics within Scheme (c).

- For Scheme (a), presently this includes a choice from one of two papers on the History of Political Thought, a paper on the Analysis of Modern Politics, and an essay paper on Conceptual Issues in Modern Politics;

- For Scheme (b), a paper on Social Psychology, a paper on Experimental Psychology, and a paper on research methods;
- For Scheme (c), a paper on Social Theory, a choice from one of two papers on Contemporary Societies and Global Transformations or the Analysis of Modern Politics, and a choice from one of two papers on Concepts and Arguments in Sociology or a paper on research methods;
- For Scheme (d), a choice from one of two papers on Social Theory or Contemporary Societies and Global Transformations, a paper on Social Psychology, and a paper on research methods.

Research methods have a significant place in IIA teaching in Schemes (b), (c) and (d). All students on Schemes (b) and (d) and some students in Scheme (c) take the paper entitled 'Methods of Inquiry and Analysis', in which they can study research methods in the social sciences, topics in the philosophy of the social sciences, and basic descriptive and inferential statistical techniques. (Basic descriptive and inferential statistical techniques is a mandatory component of the methods paper for students on Schemes (b) and (d); the research methods paper is optional for students in Scheme (c)). All students taking the research methods paper, also undertake a simple research project (presented in a 5,000-word essay). The project requires them to engage in some type of data collection, alone or in a group, whether from a small fieldwork project or from printed sources, and to analyze the data using quantitative or qualitative methods. The analysis is carried out individually by each student. The paper can be used as a preliminary study for those students who wish to undertake a dissertation in IIB. Students for Scheme (a) are encouraged in IIA to develop their capacities for independent thought and inquiry in two long assessed essays.

On completing Part IIA students should have acquired:

Overall: a knowledge at intermediate level of the discipline or disciplines within their chosen scheme.

For students in Scheme (a):

1. A close understanding of a range of more specialized texts from a period in the history of political thought, and of issues and arguments in international politics and comparative politics;
2. An ability, in response to general analytical questions, to define and explain the scope of each question, to explore sources, and to develop an argument at length in writing.

For students in Scheme (b):

1. A deeper understanding of social psychological theories and findings.
2. A basic understanding of learning, memory and cognition, and practical experience of experimental design and analysis.
3. A training in research methods, sufficient to enable them to undertake a simple research project and to use computerized statistical packages.

For students in Scheme (c):

1. Knowledge of the major individuals and schools of thought in modern social theory;
2. *Either* a sociological understanding of global social, economic and political transformations and of the theories and concepts used in explaining them, *or* an understanding of issues and arguments in international politics and comparative politics;
3. *Either* an understanding of research methods and design, sufficient to enable them to undertake a simple research project and to assess the use made of data and methods in published research output, *or* an ability to think analytically about key sociological concepts, to assess the relations between sociological theories and empirical evidence and to develop an argument at length in writing.

For students in Scheme (d):

1. *Either* knowledge of the major individuals and schools of thought in modern social theory, *or* a sociological understanding of global social, economic and political transformations and of the theories and concepts used in explaining them;
2. A deeper understanding of social psychological theories and findings, and a basic understanding of learning, memory and cognition.
3. A training in research methods, including the ability to use computerized statistical packages, sufficient to enable them to undertake a simple research project.

Part IIB (the 3rd year)

In Part IIB students take four papers, and they have greater variety of choice. All IIB papers are advanced level and are designed to bring students into close contact with staff research interests. Students may specialize further in their IIA discipline or disciplines, they may take interdisciplinary thematic papers designed for the third year, or they may take one or two IIB papers from a discipline other than those in their primary Scheme, as specified by the regulations.

In Scheme (a) one of the four papers is an unseen written examination in Conceptual Issues and Texts in Modern Politics. Students taking Scheme (b) must, with supervision, research and write a dissertation or research report as one of their IIB papers. Dissertations are optional in all the other Schemes.

Students changing into PPS to take a one-year Part II take four papers, for which guidelines are available online (http://www.ppsis.cam.ac.uk/current/undergraduate/guidelines_part2_1yr.html) and from college Directors of Study. All combinations are approved on an individual basis by the Faculty Board, taking into account students' previous courses of study.

Third-year PPS students are also able to follow specialised, interdisciplinary, research-led papers such as Gender and Society and The Family. There is also the opportunity to take courses offered in other Faculties or by Area Studies Centres. These include: Colonialism and Empire, Modern Japan, Latin America, South Asia and Crime and Deviance. Some PPS papers are made available to students in Economics, Social Anthropology, Modern Languages, History, Medical and Veterinary Sciences and Experimental Psychology.

On completing Part IIB students should have acquired:

Overall:

1. An advanced-level knowledge of their IIA discipline or disciplines and, if they wish, knowledge of a subject in a different discipline and/or of an interdisciplinary area of study;
2. If they offer long essays, an ability to develop a question and to answer it at a level of detail and complexity beyond that required for supervision essays;
3. If they choose to offer a dissertation, an ability to define a subject and undertake independent investigation of it, using primary or, where appropriate, secondary data.

For students in Scheme (a):

1. An ability to deploy the skills acquired in Parts I and IIA in a close understanding of more complex issues in at least one of the following: political thought (including modern political philosophy), international politics, comparative politics, and the modern politics of a particular region or country;
2. An ability to assess an unseen text in politics or to answer an unprepared general question on a political issue of theoretical and practical interest.

For students in Scheme (b):

1. An understanding of the concepts and methods employed in developmental psychology;
2. The methodological and conceptual skills to undertake and report their own research project;
3. A deepened knowledge and understanding of contemporary research on selected topics in social or developmental psychology;
4. A training in psychology to the level required for graduate membership of the British Psychological Society.

For students in Scheme (c):

1. Detailed understanding of contemporary research in one or more fields in Sociology;
2. The possibility, if they choose, to acquire a detailed understanding of complex issues in modern Politics;
3. The possibility, if they choose, to acquire a detailed understanding of complex issues in one or more fields of advanced interdisciplinary research.
4. If they choose, the methodological and conceptual skills to undertake and report their own research project.

For students in Scheme (d):

1. If they choose, a deepened knowledge and understanding of up-to-date research on selected topics in social or developmental psychology;
2. If they choose, a detailed understanding of recent research in at least one field of specialization in Sociology.
3. If they choose, a detailed understanding of complex issues in one or more fields of advanced interdisciplinary research.
4. If they choose, the methodological and conceptual skills to undertake and report their own research project

Teaching and Learning Methods

Teaching is provided by the Faculty in the form of lectures, and, for some papers, classes and seminars, relating to the papers offered in the Tripos; and by the Colleges in the form of supervisions which give students individual and small group teaching related to the papers studied through written work and feedback thereon. Supervisions also require students to develop oral skills of analysis, presentation, argumentation and discussion. For Part I supervision is arranged by College Directors of Studies. For Part II PPS has adopted a system of centralised supervision management whereby the course organiser for each paper undertakes to provide a list of supervisors and to allocate students either to supervisors or into supervision groups with those supervisors. Colleges and Directors of Studies who prefer to organise this teaching are at liberty to do so. Students are encouraged throughout to undertake independent reading and study to back up and consolidate what is being taught.

Assessment Methods

Continuous assessment and monitoring of students' progress: Formative assessment consists principally of supervisors reading students' essays, marking them up with written comments (for which the Faculty has issued guidelines) and discussing them in supervisions. Undergraduates can expect to attend between 8 and 12 supervisions per 8-week term.

Formal examination procedures: Summative assessment takes the following forms: three-hour unseen closed-book examinations, which remain the principal method of examination; 5,000-word essays on subjects chosen from lists of prescribed topics; 10,000-word dissertations on subjects approved by the Faculty Board; and, in Social Psychology and methods papers, experimental and statistical exercises and short research projects. The 5,000-word essays are a compulsory part of Scheme (a) in IIA, and dissertations are compulsory in Scheme (b) in IIB.

Examination is undertaken by independent Boards of Examiners appointed by the University on the advice of the Faculty Board, with externals for each of the three disciplines. All examinations are classed and criteria for classing are published. All scripts and other assessed work set by PPSIS are subject to blind, anonymous double-marking, and borderline cases or serious unresolved disagreements among markers are referred to external examiners. Marks awarded by externals in cases of unresolved disagreements between first markers are final. Special arrangements are made for candidates who are unwell or suffer from certain disabilities, such as dyslexia. The Tripos also incorporates marks from borrowed papers and at both Parts. These marks are generally simply incorporated, although comparability in assessment is assured by the appointment of Assessors in both directions.

Students have access to their examination marks through their Colleges and examiners produce reports on performance in each paper every year. External examiners' general reports and internal examiners' reports are made known to students through their representatives on the Faculty Board and are published online.

Entry Requirements

AAA average 'A' level score of 29 points Admission is based on high achievement in 'A' level or equivalent examinations, school recommendations and success in interview. Almost all applicants are interviewed. Around 120 students are admitted each year, all of whom are full-time.

Indicators of Quality

QAA Score 23
RAE Score Sociology & Social Psychology 5; Politics (with International Studies) 4.

Learning Support

The core teaching staff consists of 42 University Teaching Officers. In addition a wide variety of staff from the Colleges, as well as some linked to other Faculties, supervise, lecture and assist as Directors of Studies.

Politics, Psychology, Sociology, and International Studies (PPSIS) is currently located on three sites: two adjacent buildings in Free School Lane and on the New Museums Site, and one in the Old Press Site, 5 minutes' walk away. The Free School Lane building has a lecture hall, seminar and teaching rooms, offices for Sociology and Psychology staff, a postgraduate study and computer room, a laboratory for undertaking psychological experiments and an observation room for psychological research both with full audio-visual facilities. Equipment includes VCRs, data projectors, DVD, CD and audio cassette players. The Old Press site houses Politics and International Studies (POLIS) and some other institutions in the School of Humanities and Social Sciences. It has lecture and seminar rooms and offices for staff and research students. The Faculty has a well-stocked undergraduate library with approximately 32,000 books, 72 periodicals and 400 pamphlets. It has 78 reader spaces, 10 computer terminals and provides access to the university-wide catalogue, e-mail and the World-Wide Web, and various bibliographic databases.

Career Destinations

PPS offers an unusually diverse range of career openings. Graduates from Scheme (b), Social Psychology, are eligible for admission to professional courses in clinical and educational psychology through graduate membership of the British Psychological Society. The University Careers Service data show that, in recent years, about one-fifth of PPS graduates went on to further study, about 40% went into the private sector, and about 15% into the public sector. Up to a third of graduates in recent years have begun careers in finance, law and business, including consultancy.

Quality Management and Enhancement

The Faculty Board is responsible for monitoring all teaching in the Faculty. The Faculty Board is obliged to show the Education Committee of the University's General Board that it has considered External Examiners' reports and that it has taken action in response to them. The Faculty's Teaching, Learning and Quality Committee, Chaired by the Faculty's Director of Undergraduate Education, draws up lecture lists and considers issues of educational policy and practice, which it may bring to the Faculty Board.

Student representatives sit on the Faculty Board, the Teaching, Learning and Quality Committee and departmental meetings. Student representatives make an important contribution to these Committees by alerting staff to problems and pressing for their solution.

The organization and quality of undergraduate supervision and the coordination between lecture courses and supervision are considered by the Directors of Studies Committee, at which Directors of Studies are able to convey problems experienced by the students for whom they are

responsible to the Director of Undergraduate Education, Heads of Departments and the Faculty Board. Feedback from the Faculty to the Directors of Studies also occurs through this Committee.

Questionnaires are used extensively to gain student feedback on teaching. Course organizers for each paper distribute them to undergraduates at the end of the Lent term. The responses are reviewed by the Heads of Departments with the course organizers, and appropriate action is then taken. Questionnaires addressing the overall content of each Scheme are also distributed at the end of Part IIA. The findings from the questionnaires are summarized by the Heads of Departments for the Director of Undergraduate Education for quality assurance purposes, and they are reviewed also by the TLQ Committee with any appropriate findings coming to the Faculty Board.

Teaching excellence is encouraged by personnel practices. All new appointees are mentored by a suitably experienced colleague. Regular two-yearly (annual for new appointees) staff appraisals are a useful mechanism through which teaching performance can be monitored and, if appropriate, a course of action for improving performance can be agreed.

The Faculty believes that it is successful in achieving its aims and objectives, and that it does so while sustaining a strong commitment to research, in the belief that teaching and research are mutually reinforcing. Students sense the excitement of teaching based on current research, and academics know that teaching is one of the most rewarding ways of communicating their own research to others.