

University of Cambridge: Programme Specifications

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POLITICS, PSYCHOLOGY AND SOCIOLOGY TRIPOS

1	Awarding body	University of Cambridge
2	Teaching institution	Faculty of Human, Social and Political Science
3	Accreditation details	None
4	Name of final award	Bachelor of Arts
5	Programme title	Politics, Psychology and Sociology Tripos
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	July 2013
11	Date specification last reviewed	July 2013

Educational Aims of the Programme

The Faculty of Human, Social and Political Sciences (formed from the former Faculty of Politics, Psychology, Sociology and International Studies and the Faculty of Archaeology and Anthropology) 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, Economics, Asian & Middle Eastern Studies, Education, Experimental Psychology, Criminology and Computer Science.

The Tripos consists of a Part I, following which students choose one of four schemes of study through Parts IIA and IIB: Sociology, Social & Developmental Psychology, Politics, or Sociology and Social & Developmental 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.

In 2013-14 Part I of the Tripos will not be offered; students will enter on Part I of the Human, Social, and Political Science Tripos.

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 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 and Developmental Psychology (known as 'Psychology within the Social Sciences', *Scheme (b)*), Sociology (*Scheme (c)*), or Sociology and Social & Developmental Psychology (*Scheme (d)*). Students can also combine Sociology and Politics within Scheme (c).

- For Scheme (a), presently this includes a paper on Ethics and World Politics, a paper on Comparative Politics (assessed by a combination of a submitted essay and an examination), and a choice from one of two papers on the History of Political Thought.
- For Scheme (b), a paper on Social Psychology, a paper on Experimental Psychology or on Biological & Cognitive 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 '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. 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 a long assessed essay.

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 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 and developmental 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 specialise 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 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, Kinship & Care and The Family. There is also the opportunity to take courses offered in other Faculties or by Area Studies Centres. These include: The Anthropology of Colonialism and Empire, Sociology of Education, History & Politics of South Asia, and Criminology, Sentencing and the Penal System. Offerings can vary each year depending on presentation of these papers by their home Faculties. Some PPS papers are made available to students in Economics, Social Anthropology, 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 social and 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 specialisation 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 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 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 or Developmental Psychology and methods papers, experimental and statistical exercises and short research projects. One 5,000-word essay is 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 to students. All scripts and other assessed work set by PPS are subject to blind and anonymous marking. All Part II scripts and other assessed work are double-marked. 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. 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

A*AA at 'A2' level or 40-42 in the IB or equivalent. 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.

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.

The Faculty of Human, Social and Political Science is currently located on four sites: two adjacent buildings in Free School Lane on the New Museums Site, two buildings on the Downing Site, and one in the Sidgwick site, 15 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 Alison Richard Building, on the Sidgwick 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, as well as common areas for undergraduate students and a café.

The Social & Political Sciences (SPS) Library on the New Museums site has 38,000 books, 200 eBooks, 62 core print journals, access to over 30,000 electronic journals and web-based subject databases. It has 78 study spaces and 10 computer terminals. The Librarian ensures that all students at undergraduate and taught graduate level have access to the material needed for their study. Working closely with teaching staff, reading-list material is provided in whatever format is most appropriate: book, eBook, digitized material. As well as providing a lending and enquiry service the Library staff help students to develop the skills to explore and exploit these resources, from induction tours through to individual sessions. The Librarian liaises with other Librarians to ensure that student access to resources is complemented by the College, Department/Faculty Libraries and University Library.

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 Indicators

The course has received consistently high scores in student satisfaction on the National Student Survey, scoring 90% in 2010, 98% in 2011, and 90% in 2012. Students are given the opportunity each year to provide feedback on their lectures, and all feedback is discussed within Divisional Teaching Committees.

Teaching excellence is encouraged by personnel practices. All new appointees are mentored by a suitably experienced colleague. Regular two-yearly (annually 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 supports a tiered system of student representation, electing undergraduate representatives in each subject to sit on the Student Forum as well as two undergraduate representatives to sit on the Faculty Board. The Forum is an interdisciplinary, Faculty-wide meeting of undergraduates and graduates in all subjects, to share good practice and support development of Faculty policy. Forum representatives also attend subject-level Teaching Committees, making an important contribution by alerting staff to problems and developing solutions.

External Examiner's reports are reviewed by the Faculty Board yearly and published to students. The organisation 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 Directors of Undergraduate Education, Heads of Departments and the Faculty Board. Feedback from the Faculty to the Directors of Studies also occurs through this Committee.

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.