



Sociology

UNDERGRADUATE GUIDE



The programmes allow you to develop not only intellectually but also personally. It's a huge strength that a degree can make you grow as a person. I would definitely recommend it.

MIE ASTRUP JENSEN 2019



I found space for all my interests - gender, sexuality, religion, social inequalities, modern history. In many ways, it really was like finding a home.

NEREA HERAS 2019



About Aberdeen

Going beyond boundaries, expectation, and tradition since 1495

For more than 525 years we have proudly offered our students life-changing opportunities by proving true to our Foundational Purpose: 'open to all and dedicated to the pursuit of truth in the service of others'.

Our rich heritage, world-leading research, and learning excellence has contributed to our association with five Nobel Prize winners and our ranking in the Top 20 UK Universities by the Guardian University Guide 2026.

Scotland's alternative city

Aberdeen is welcoming, adventurous, unafraid, and forever evolving – the perfect place to find your purpose and your people. Nestled in between the Cairngorms National Park and miles of golden coastline, Aberdeen has something exciting at every turn.

An ancient campus that has helped shape the modern world

Since 1495 our campus, and the world around it, have seen many changes. But the medieval core of King's College has remained constant. Over the centuries we've continued to add and innovate, growing our campus to the ideal blend of old and new you'll find today.

To keep breaking boundaries in education and research, we need to keep innovating. We are committed to investing in our campus to provide the very best learning resources for our students.

Our iconic Sir Duncan Rice Library is so much more than a study space. With social and collaborative spaces, a public lending library and museum, the Library embodies our foundational promise to be open to all in the service of others.

A community committed to inclusion and progress

At Aberdeen, you'll make friends and connections that will last a lifetime. Aberdeen has been voted one of the safest and most affordable cities in the UK (Complete University Guide 2025). When you come to Aberdeen, you'll be well looked after and will become part of a close-knit community known for its outstanding support.



MA Sociology

Sociology is the study of societies. It examines how societies work, how they are changing, and how individuals are affected in multiple ways by the world around them. Sociology allows students to understand the world around them in ways that are both novel and critical.

Why Study Sociology at Aberdeen?

Sociology at Aberdeen is widely regarded as one of the best sociology departments in the UK. In the last onsite review by the Scottish Higher Education Funding Council, we were judged to be 'Excellent' – the highest grade possible – in its Teaching Quality Assessment (TQA) exercise.

We are strongly committed to providing students with outstandingly good teaching, through a range of engaging courses on many areas of contemporary social importance.

Sociology at Aberdeen has many leading scholars who are internationally recognized experts in their fields. The department is particularly well known for its work in the areas of the sociology of conflict and peace processes; policing; globalization; religion; political and economic sociology; European societies; social inequalities; animal-human relations.

Results from the UK Government's most recent Research Excellence Framework (REF) in 2021 confirmed the status of Sociology at Aberdeen as one of the UK's leading research units in the field. More than 78% of the research judged by a panel of experts was deemed world-leading

(4*) or internationally excellent (3*) and all of the department's work met national standards of excellence. The department was also ranked as one of the two top sociology units in Scotland.

Aberdeen is, in every way, a great place to study the fascinating and highly relevant subject of Sociology.

Degree Structure & Content

In the Aberdeen undergraduate degree there are two initial years of study before you specialize: In both first year and second year, you take various different subjects. Alongside your Sociology courses, you can take almost any subject including those in the arts, humanities, and social sciences

In the third and fourth years you have the option to follow a single Honours degree or study Sociology as part of a Joint Honours degree, including the recently added joint MA Criminology and Society, giving you the flexibility to shape your degree to suit your particular interests and career plans.

First & Second Year

The four-year degree enables students to understand their chosen subjects in-depth. In first year, sociology courses explore the relationships between individuals on the one hand and social forces and institutions on the other. We also examine the character of societies in the present day. We examine a range of key topics, including issues such as self-identity and group behaviour,

deviance, consumerism, urbanization, crime, modern organizations, religion, mass media, surveillance, education, social inequalities, and gender.

In second year, we examine the nature of modern societies in more detail and we consider what special insights sociology can give us about them. We look both at microsociology – the study of people in small groups and in everyday life – and macrosociology – the study of largescale social forces and institutions, often worldwide in scope, that can affect whole societies and all the individuals who live within them.

Third & Fourth Year

Third year consists of courses in Thinking Sociologically, Sociology of Religion, Ten Sociological Studies, and Social Research Methods. The Methods course prepares students to pursue their own research topic in fourth year. In the final year, you choose optional courses from a broad range of staff specialisms, exploring major sociological themes in-depth and addressing some of the key issues confronting contemporary societies.

Some examples of Honours courses are:

- Rule of Law: International Challenges
- Crime and Social Justice
- Animals and Society
- Gendered Approaches to Conflict and Societies
- Modern Slavery, Human Trafficking and Exploitation
- Sex, Death and the Afterlife
- Social Inequality
- Sex, Gender, Violence: Critical Approaches
- Crime and Empire

Meet your Lecturer



My name is Isabella Kasselstrand and I am a lecturer in the Sociology Department at the University of Aberdeen.

I love teaching Sociology – the scientific study of social relationships and patterns – and especially research methods and statistics. I am a firm believer that anyone can learn to analyse and interpret social science data proficiently – and even enjoy it! Such skills make sociology graduates of the University of Aberdeen highly marketable in various professions.

I use statistical methods in my own research on social change, primarily on patterns of religious decline around the world.

Department of Sociology

School of Social Science

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MA Criminology and Sociology

Criminology is the study of crime, law, and criminal justice. This new interdisciplinary programme combines dedicated Criminology modules with modules from Sociology, Psychology and Law to provide a broadly based and comprehensive Criminology and Sociology joint honours undergraduate degree.

Why study Criminology and Sociology at Aberdeen?

This multidisciplinary degree programme is delivered by the School of Social Sciences in partnership with the School of Psychology and the School of Law to offer a comprehensive understanding of the social, psychological and legal aspects of crime. Students will gain a range of sound theoretical, methodological and analytical skills, which will be applied in an independent research project in the final year.

Degree Structure & Content

You will study the theory and methods of criminology and apply your theoretical understanding of crime to investigate real-world problems such as victimisation, domestic violence, youth crime, public disorder, environmental harms, and cyber-crime.

You will also explore how technological advances are affecting crime and crime detection, including surveillance, facial recognition technologies and forensic psychology.

First & Second Year

This four-year degree enables students to understand their chosen subject in-depth. In first year, the sociology courses students take will explore the relationships between individuals, as well as those between social forces and institutions. Students will also begin exploring foundational concepts of psychology, and take introductory courses to criminal law and common law thinking.

In second year, we examine the nature of modern societies and criminology in more detail. Students delve further into the sociology of people in small groups and everyday life, as well as more modern, global sociological issues. Students also gain a sociologically-based understanding of criminology and criminal justice and explore advanced psychological concepts.

Third & Fourth Year

In third year students continue to develop their understanding of psychology, sociology, and criminology with courses in:

- Thinking Sociologically
- Biological Psychology
- Social Psychology
- Crime and Social Justice
- Policing and Society

Students will also take Social Research Methods, which develops a range of theoretical, methodological, and analytical skills.

In fourth year, students examine theories that attempt to explain why people act in a deviant or criminal manner through the Criminology course. Students will also take Face Recognition and Forensic Psychology, courses which span a range of theoretical and applied issues in forensic and criminal psychology, and examine how these issues also apply to the wider modern world. Additionally, students will have the option to create an individual piece of research on a topic of their choosing in their fourth year, culminating in a written dissertation.

Careers and Skills

The Department ensures that its graduates have excellent knowledge of sociology and the ability and imagination to apply this information to real-life situations. Our courses provide considerable insight into the workings of modern societies and into the behaviour of people in social groups.

Our graduates acquire essential skills to prepare them for challenging professional roles, including how to conduct research and evaluate the research of others, critical enquiry skills, clear communication, good presentation, and independence of judgment.

Careers

Sociology and Criminology complement other disciplines such as Psychology, Politics, International Relations, Anthropology, Law, History, English, and many others. The interdisciplinary nature of the subject area, along with the extensive skillset and knowledge developed over the course of study, mean graduates are excellently qualified for entry into a range of career options.

Sociology graduates can be found in areas such as management (including HR), national and local government, media and journalism, advertising and marketing, teaching, as well as NGOs and social and community services, amongst many others. Graduates of Criminology and Sociology can see themselves in careers within public policy fields in all sectors (public, voluntary, and private), as well as more specifically within criminal justice organisations.

Recent graduate destinations include:

- Analyst
- Associate researcher
- Health and safety specialist
- Policy officer
- Student engagement and wellbeing coordinator
- Support practitioner
- Teacher
- Well-being coordinator



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