

Department of Sociology

Guide for Teachers



UNIVERSITY OF
CAMBRIDGE

Why Cambridge?

Cambridge is a world leading centre for research and teaching in Sociology, with a number of our academics achieving awards for their dedication to teaching and supporting pupils. The small department is friendly, vibrant and very supportive. It is home to some of the world's leading sociologists, ensuring that our students are taught the most up-to-date research and will complete their degree with contemporary, relevant skills and knowledge.

Students at Cambridge are taught through a series of lectures, seminars and supervisions. Supervisions provide students with an opportunity to meet their supervisor (a member of the department) in a small group setting (usually 2-3 students). During supervisions, students will work on and discuss essays and any other academic concerns, allowing them to explore more about their favourite Sociology topics.

Cambridge also provides a number of other outstanding student support services. Pastoral support is provided through the College, but facilities such as the Disability Resource Centre, University Counselling Service and Careers Centre, provide extra support.

Sociology falls within the Faculty of Human Social and Political Sciences, so any students wishing to apply to study Sociology must apply to the HSPS programme. The HSPS Tripos is home to the Departments of Sociology, Social Anthropology and Politics and International Studies; each of which has an international reputation for outstanding teaching and research.

HSPS provides a broad undergraduate curriculum which means students can tailor their degree to suit their specific interests.

In the first year of the course, all students are expected to read papers (or take modules) from across all three departments. In their second and third years, students can choose to read papers from one of these departments as a 'single track' entry or from two departments as a 'joint track' (i.e. Sociology with Politics). Further to this, students are able to take papers from other subjects such as Psychology.

Students joining HSPS from 2017 will have the opportunity to study Sociology with Criminology as a joint track.



Course Content

The range of papers that is offered to students studying Sociology at Cambridge is incredibly diverse. Areas of focus may include Social Theory; Media, Culture and Society; Gender; Health, Medicine and Society; Research Methods; Education and Revolution, War and Militarism.

More specific information about the course content can be found at <http://www.sociology.cam.ac.uk/undergraduates>

Applicant Qualifications

Admissions decisions are made on an individual basis. Admissions Tutors are looking for students who they believe have:

- Academic ability and potential
- Will benefit from and flourish in the Cambridge learning environment
- Are suited to the HSPS course

Typically, offers for the course are based on students achieving A*AA at A-Level, or 40-42/45 points with 776 or 777 at Higher Level in the International Baccalaureate. Other qualifications will also be considered, but we recommend contacting a College Admissions Tutor for further advice.

It is not essential for students to have studied any of the HSPS subject prior to application, but students must provide evidence for a strong interest in these subjects.



Seminars at Cambridge.

Credit: Cambridge University on Digital Assets

Application Process

The application process at Cambridge is slightly different to other Universities and the application deadline is slightly earlier; mid-October. Students at Cambridge apply to a College, rather than a Department (although students can submit an open application where they do not have to pick a specific College- this will not jeopardise their application).

Students apply to Cambridge via UCAS and must submit two additional pieces of written work alongside their application. We recommend that this work demonstrates the students interest in an HSPS subject or topic and we are very happy to accept essays that have been written for a piece of homework or coursework.

We understand that HSPS is a broad subject and it is likely that students will be submitting their UCAS application to multiple Universities. We therefore encourage students to write their Personal Statement honestly, focusing on the subject that they most wish to study. Students have the opportunity to submit a Supplementary Application Questionnaire (SAQ) alongside their application, which they can use to justify their rationale for applying to HSPS.

Successful students will be interviewed in December and offers given shortly after interview.

Choosing a College

Colleges provide students with pastoral support, accommodation and have a number of facilities for extra-curricular activities, such as sports and drama. Each College has a different atmosphere. Prior to application, students should first consider which Colleges provide HSPS. Next, students should consider where they would like to live for three years, often students find it helpful to think about the following when choosing their College:

- Age at application
- Gender (there are three women's only Colleges)
- Size of the College
- College facilities
- Student personal preference

Written Assessments

At application stage, we ask for an example of a relevant piece of work the student has written as part of their A-Level/ IB course. These assessments should be marked by the teacher and the school/ college must provide a cover sheet confirming that it is the applicant's own work and detailing the circumstances in which it was written.



Studying SPS

Credit: Cambridge University on Digital Assets

Preparing for Interview

The main reason for interviewing students is to explore their academic potential, motivation and suitability for their chosen course. The questions asked will assess the students' problem-solving abilities; ability to assimilate new ideas and information; and their intellectual flexibility and analytical reasoning.

Students will be asked academic questions, relevant to HSPS and based on the information written in their application. Spend time with your students asking them to talk about their motivations for applying to HSPS and insights into the subject area. Use the essays that the student has submitted with their application as a foundation for discussion. The interviewers will ask the applicant about their wider interests, so it is a good idea to spend some time talking with your student about any extra-curricular activities that they participate in and how they envisage participating in wider College life whilst studying at Cambridge. More information about interviews can be found at www.cam.ac.uk/interviews.

Personal Statements

Personal statements are often used as a basis for discussion at interview. In their personal statement, we expect applicants to explain why they wish to study HSPS and to demonstrate their enthusiasm for the course. We would like the student to discuss any particular areas of interest within HSPS, exemplifying how they have pursued their interests in HSPS in their own time.

We expect applicants to discuss their extra-curricular activities in their personal statement, relating these to characteristics that will help the student succeed at Cambridge i.e. through developing particular skills or qualities such as perseverance, independence, leadership or team-work.

The Cambridge specific SAQ is an optional extra and applicants will not be disadvantaged if they have nothing to add to their UCAS statement.

Tutor Reference

There is no need to write a special reference for Cambridge, however if you wish to make any Cambridge-specific comments, please direct these to the Admissions Tutor at the College to which the student has applied or the Cambridge Admissions Office in the case of an open application.

In general, the reference should inform us of the student's abilities and potential. The reference should make it clear that the student's abilities are suited to the course. It is useful for us to understand the applicant's intellectual flexibility and curiosity, analytic ability, logical reasoning and ability to learn quickly. We look for comments in the reference to be supported by evidence about the student's achievements and intellect.

The reference is also space for you to mention if there may be specific reasons for a student's underperformance (i.e. health or other personal circumstances).

Student Support

Cambridge provides an incredibly supportive environment for students to learn, live and develop within. Each College has their own pastoral support system for their students, so students who are struggling will not go unnoticed. There is also an extensive welfare network run by the Cambridge University Students' Union, which includes a confidential advice service and specific campaigns and initiatives focused on mental health, sexual health and disabilities. Further to this, the University also provides a central Disability Resource Centre and University Counselling Service to support students with specific needs.

As Sociology is a small department, we provide a supportive environment for our students to learn within. We provide support through our academic staff and have a dedicated undergraduate secretary to support students through their studies. Students are able to become Student Representatives; these students are given the opportunity to attend Departmental meetings and raise any concerns from their peers about course or Departmental related issues. We use this feedback to alter or adapt our courses to students' needs. Furthermore, we run seminars which students are encouraged to attend; these seminars help students get to know their subject, tutors and peers better and allow a space for them to explore areas of interest within the course.

Gap Years

Most students who apply to Cambridge apply straight from school. We do however consider mature students (age 21+) and students who have taken gap years.

Around 6% of Cambridge students take a gap year, often using this time to improve skills, earn money, travel and gain maturity. Students should indicate they plan to defer their entry in their UCAS application and be prepared to talk about their plans at interview.



Study skills

Credit: Cambridge University on Digital Assets

Finance and Bursaries

Cambridge has a large amount of financial support available for its students. For UK/EU students, bursaries of up to £3,500/ year (up to £5,600/year for mature students and care leavers) can be offered through the Cambridge Bursary Scheme.

Financial support is also available to students through Colleges and additional awards for sports, music and students with disabilities.

Aside from this, Cambridge does try to reduce costs for its students where possible by providing low accommodation costs, fair food costs, outstanding library facilities (including computer and printer services) and a student card which offers discounts in local shops and restaurants. Many of the student societies are funded and the Colleges provide inexpensive bars and dining halls.

Further Teacher Support

The University provides dedicated teachers' resources to help you find out more about the Cambridge application process, including support on written assessments, references and events for teachers. The best way to access this information is by visiting <http://www.undergraduate.study.cam.ac.uk/find-out-more/teachers-and-parents>

Useful Resources:

www.cam.ac.uk/teachers

<http://www.cambridgestudents.cam.ac.uk/cambridgebursary>

<http://www.undergraduate.study.cam.ac.uk/fees-and-finance>

<http://www.cam.ac.uk/interviews>

www.undergraduate.study.cam.ac.uk

<http://www.myheplus.com/>

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