

FAQs

Sociology programme

School of Arts and Social Sciences

Singapore University of Social Sciences (SUSS)

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1. What is Sociology?

Sociology is an established social science that studies human social behaviour, the organisation of human society and how societies undergo change.

The discipline has a long history and is offered at all established institutions of higher learning. It raises questions about and studies all aspects of contemporary social life and socio-cultural phenomena involving health, education, family relations, gender and ethnic relations, the media, and others. It may look at these from a historical and comparative viewpoint to see how current ideas and practices have been shaped, and consider what these mean for the future. In today's world, sociology studies pressing yet exciting issues such as the changing use of public space in the city, how to understand multi-ethnicity and religious diversity in Singapore, the effectiveness of health and education policies, the changing nature of work and employment, the impact of globalisation on culture and heritage, amongst others. Sociological knowledge also contributes to social policy and change.

2. Is Sociology the same as Social Work?

Sociology is not the same as social work although they share concerns. They are two different disciplines, and while social work prepares people to be practitioners in helping and intervening in a particular setting within the social services, sociology asks questions about and provides analysis on patterns of human behaviour within the context of groups, institutions and the wider social change.

For example, the social worker may ask 'how do I intervene, and help this child affected by poverty and crime in the family?' while a sociologist may ask 'how do changing economic and social conditions shape the crises families face?'

3. What is the Sociology programme at SUSS about?

At SUSS's School of Arts and Social Sciences, we offer a choice of degree programmes in Sociology: you can take Sociology as a single subject, or Sociology with a choice of minor (Communication, Contemporary China Studies, Film Studies, Political Science, Psychology, or Security Studies).

Our programme offers a study of contemporary social issues and challenges faced by individuals living and working in urban environments, relating to health, healthcare and medicine, social integration versus divisions of race, class and gender, globalisation, the role and problems of education, law and order etc. You will study social problems from a Singapore, regional and global perspective. Besides career enhancement, we also hope to inculcate in our students a lifelong learning and curiosity about the societies, cultures, and institutions in which we live.

Our assessments include research projects to cultivate a practice-oriented, dynamic link between the curriculum and everyday social life and issues faced by individuals in urban Singapore. Our students bring their work and lives into sociology, and sociology into their vocations and personal lives – they have interviewed caregivers, analysed the integrated resorts, visited urban districts to understand social change related to ageing, urban planning, education, family, ethnicity, gender and class divisions, law and order, and more.

4. Why do students find Sociology appealing and useful?

Our adult learners find in Sociology a refreshing set of perspectives and knowledges about the world that we live in. You will learn about how the world we live in is shaped, how society works, and learn to think more deeply and knowledgeably about current topics of interest such as:

- Social issues involving changes in the family in Asia (including Singapore)
- Issues faced by an ageing society (economics, social policy, cultural ideas about ageing.)
- Law and order
- The social consequences of a globalised world; the politics and economics of Southeast Asian societies
- Popular culture and consumption; urban spaces and power
- Health and notions of illness as they are shaped by society; the role and workings of the medical profession in society; how politics, socio-economic and cultural factors influence healthcare
- The impact of technology on society and vice versa
- The role of education; critique and analysis of curriculum, educational opportunity

This is a *unique opportunity* for *adult learners* who harbour an interest in understanding their environment and who bring with them a whole array of life experiences. You will cultivate a more informed view of society and issues that affect you both personally and professionally.

Depending on your professional and personal interests, you can choose from a range of courses such as sociology of education, family, gender, law and order, health and medicine in medical sociology, social gerontology (on ageing issues), pop culture, southeast asian societies, or even study issues to do with urban living, planning and renewal in Singapore and Southeast Asia. You will also find our courses on sociological theory enlightening, for they highlight how eminent thinkers have explained the dramatic transformations that have shaped the world order today.

5. Who is the programme for?

The programme will be very suitable for you if you are already working in the civil service and public administration, in social services sectors involving health, community and social development, in education, in heritage and the arts, or in many industries in the *private* sector including the media or market research companies, especially if you are looking to upgrade your qualifications in order to enhance your skills and knowledge within your profession.

It will also suit those who are considering moving into such organisations and industries. Our courses will also be relevant to students who deal with social deviance and law and order, social work and counseling in their work.

6. What skills will I cultivate?

You will:

- Cultivate analytical skills that are flexible and transferrable and can be applied to understand any challenges or societal issues faced by a changing world.
- Gain essential professional skills such as the research methodological skills as you undergo training in social research methods and data analysis, to handle different forms of data.
- Build on and develop theoretical and up-to-date knowledge and perspectives to recognise, explain and engage with societal developments and trends in Singapore, regionally and globally.

Graduates are increasingly required to be adaptable, and proficient in analytical skills in a globalised environment and knowledge-based society. Social concerns also become increasingly important through the proliferation of organisations for social purposes, and evident in the decisions of policy-makers. Sociology-trained graduates with their breadth and depth of sociological knowledge and research skills should be well placed to contribute within their professions and to society.

7. In what kinds of professions and organisations do we find sociologists or graduates of sociology?

You'll find professional sociologists as academics in universities, social researchers in government and non-government organisations, in education, community and social development services, in the media and cultural institutions, rehabilitation services, and others.

Graduates with a general degree in sociology proficient in analytical skills and knowledge about Singapore, Asia or beyond, versed in social/market trends and policy, and in handling data are found in the civil service and public administration, in private and commercial/creative industries, and in community or non-government organisations. Whether they are working in sectors such as arts and media, urban and community planning, business, market research and communications, health, education, social services or others, a background in sociology provides essential training in research skills, critical thinking and analytical skills, and knowledges about society and social issues. These are both important and transferable, especially in a world that is complex and fast-changing (including professions and industries, which are rapidly evolving). The discipline develops in students critical abilities to bring insight into developments in these areas.

8. How can I find out more about the Sociology courses and programme?

Find out about the Sociology degrees and their courses offered at SUSS's website for the School of Arts and Social Sciences, and at our Open House briefing (details on the University website). You may also contact the Head of programmes at sytan@suss.edu.sg