The Human, Social, and Political Sciences Tripos is a degree formed from the amalgamation of elements of the previously-offered Archaeological & Anthropological Tripos, and the Politics, Psychology, and Sociology Tripos. The Tripos is offered within the Faculty of Human, Social, and Political Science and teaching is provided by three Departments within the Faculty (Social Anthropology, Sociology and Politics).

Programme structure

The Tripos offers, over a three-year period, disciplinary depth and range supported by interdisciplinary breadth. Students follow a multi-disciplinary first year, and in the second and third year progress through their chosen subject(s). Students have the choice in the third year to explore both advanced research-led papers in the subject disciplines and advanced options based on interdisciplinary perspectives at the forefront of contemporary research in the human and social sciences.

Part I
Undergraduates on the Tripos study a multi-disciplinary first year, in which students take a minimum of three introductory papers from four core subjects on the Tripos. Students also have the option of borrowing their fourth paper from a selection of papers from other subjects that are made available within the Tripos. The first year will introduce students to the subject options available to them, many of which they may not have had the opportunity to study previously.

Part II
In the second and third year of the Tripos, students must choose one of the specialist or joint tracks offered. These are:

Single-subject tracks
- Politics
- Sociology
- Social Anthropology

Joint subject tracks
- Politics and Sociology
- Sociology and Social Anthropology
• Social Anthropology and Politics
• Sociology and Criminology

Each of the subject tracks above is structured with clearly defined subject specialisation in the second year, with a selection of core papers in the subject and optional papers borrowed from other subjects within the Tripos or from other Triposes within the University. This will allow students to gain specialist subject knowledge complemented by interdisciplinary combinations that engage student’s specialist interests. In the third year, the disciplinary specialisation is continued and focuses on engaging students with current research and critical thinking in their chosen area.

The joint subject tracks are specifically designed to provide students with foundation knowledge in both of their chosen disciplines, and students choose two papers from each of the subjects. Optional paper choices on these subjects may be limited to options within the subject areas of the track, rather than wider parts of the Tripos.

Educational aims

The Tripos aims:
• To provide students with an excellent education in the human and social sciences;
• To provide an appropriate balance between disciplinary depth and subject specialisation, and interdisciplinary breadth;
• To maintain the highest academic standards, maintaining channels between the curriculum and current research;
• To develop critical-thinking skills and an understanding of evidential basis and critical appraisal in all subjects;
• To provide an intellectually-stimulating environment in which students have the opportunity to develop their skills and interests to their full potential;
• To develop written and oral presentation skills, and to provide students with the opportunity to develop skills in research and use of research resources, such as internet and database searches, and use of laboratory equipment as appropriate;
• To produce graduates with outstanding intellectual versatility, multicultural sensitivity, and international outlook highly valued by employers.

Learning outcomes

Knowledge and understanding

Part I
On completion of Part I, students will have obtained:
• A key understanding of basic concepts within the subject areas offered, in order to build a solid foundation for further study in the Tripos;
• An understanding of the diversity of intellectual skills that can be brought to bear on studies of humanity and its social and political institutions;
• An ability to read and assess a range of standard literatures, to develop their own arguments in response to those literatures, to express these arguments on paper and to defend them in discussion;
• A basic understanding of the methods used in research, analysis and fieldwork, as appropriate.

Part IIA
On completion of Part IIA, students will have obtained:
• Knowledge at an intermediate level of their chosen discipline or disciplines;
• A more detailed understanding of the theoretical background, history, and methodologies used in their chosen discipline or disciplines.
• Subject-specific skills, as outlined below.

Part IIB
On completion of Part IIB, students will have obtained:
• Advanced knowledge of their chosen discipline or disciplines;
• An understanding of contemporary research topics in their chosen discipline or disciplines;
• If they have chosen to offer a dissertation, an ability to define a research subject and undertake independent investigation of it, using primary or secondary data as appropriate;
• A foundation for further self-directed and self-motivated study and analysis;
• Subject-specific skills, as outlined below.

Skills and other attributes

Social Anthropology track
The primary aim of the second year is to provide a broad foundational basis in the advanced study of social organisation, comparative socio-cultural analysis and social theory.
On completion of Part IIA, students will have:
• An understanding of the nature and extent of the diversity of human societies and cultures;
• A good understanding of the foundations of social and cultural anthropology in the following fields: (a) kinship, economics, politics and religion; (b) the history of anthropological enquiry;
• A good understanding of the development of social theory and of the repertoire of concepts and key research methods used in anthropological analysis;
• Knowledge of the social, cultural, economic and political features of one region of the world and the anthropological debates concerning this area;
• An appreciation of the relationship between local social and cultural forms in relation to global processes and broader temporal developments;
• An ability to question cultural assumptions;
• An awareness of how anthropology articulates with cognate disciplines;
• Good understanding of one specialised theme in Social Anthropology or in cognate disciplines.

On completion of Part IIB, students will have:
• Competence in using major theoretical perspectives and concepts in anthropology;
• An ability to formulate, investigate and discuss anthropologically-formed questions about human societies and cultures;
• Advanced understanding of the following core themes in Social Anthropology: (a) ethics, belief and subjectivity; (b) political economy and social transformation;
• Capacity to use ethnographic description in relation to theory and assess the qualities of different kinds of description;
• Advanced understanding of at least two specialised themes in anthropology;
• The ability to plan, undertake, and present scholarly work that demonstrates an understanding of anthropological aims, methods, and theoretical considerations.

Politics & International Relations track
On completion of Part IIA, students will have:
• A close understanding of a range of more specialised texts from a period in the history of political thought, and of issues and arguments in international politics and comparative politics;
• 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.

On completion of Part IIB, students will have:
• 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;
• 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.

Sociology track

On completion of Part IIA, students will have:
• Knowledge of the major individuals and schools of thought in modern social theory;
• A sociological understanding of global social, economic and political transformations and of the theories and concepts used in explaining them;
• 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; and/or an understanding of research methods and statistics, sufficient to enable them to undertake a small research project and to assess the use made of data and methods in published research output.

On completion of Part IIB, students will have:
• In-depth understanding of contemporary scholarship and research in one or more fields of sociology;
• The ability to link together theory and empirical research in relation to particular social problems and issues;
• The possibility, if they choose, to acquire a detailed understanding of complex issues in cognate disciplines, including politics and social anthropology;
• The possibility, if they choose, to undertake a sustained research project and to analyse and report the results.

Students on any joint track will obtain the same knowledge and skills, with a narrower focus, as students on the single-subject tracks above.

Teaching methods

Teaching is provided in the form of lectures and, for some papers, practical classes, seminars, and coursework which will vary by subject and paper chosen. Teaching is also provided 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 in analysis, presentation, argumentation and discussion. Students are encouraged throughout the Tripos to undertake independent reading and study to back up and consolidate what is being taught. Learning skills will be developed throughout the Tripos through personal study, participation in lectures, practical classes and seminars, and essay writing in supervisions. Most subjects in the Tripos host weekly or fortnightly optional seminar groups to provide students with the opportunity to acquire supplementary learning through interaction with graduate students, staff, and members of the wider University.
Assessment methods

Student assessment is monitored continually through feedback of supervision essays, supervision discussions, and, where applicable, participation in practical classes or fieldwork.

Part I
All Part I papers are examined through three-hour unseen closed-book examinations at the end of the year. Some Part I papers also carry mandatory coursework elements, such as practical or laboratory write-ups or fieldwork reports, which form part of the overall assessment for the paper.

Part IIA and Part IIB
Assessment in Part II may vary based on the subject track chosen. Students can expect that the majority of assessment, regardless of subject track, will be based on a three-hour unseen closed-book examination at the end of the year. In addition:

- Some papers on the Politics & International Relations and the Sociology and Criminology tracks may be assessed by two 5,000-word long essays chosen from lists of prescribed topics, in lieu of a standard paper that is assessed by three-hour examination;
- All Part IIB students have the option of submitting for assessment a 10,000-word dissertation on a topic of their choice approved by the Faculty Board, in lieu of a standard paper.

In most Parts and subjects, students are permitted to borrow identified papers from other Triposes, in which case students will be assessed according to the requirements for the hosting Tripos. Comparability in assessment for borrowed papers is assured by the Chair of Examinations and by the Faculty Board.

Students in Part I of the Tripos are examined and classed as a whole. In Part II, each of the single-subject tracks holds its own meeting of Examiners and publishes a separate classlist. The joint tracks in Part II will each publish a separate classlist, but will be assessed at a meeting of Examiners for one of the single-subject tracks.

Entry and/or progression requirements

Admission to the Human, Social, and Political Sciences Tripos through the Colleges is based on high achievement at A Level or equivalent examinations, school recommendations, and success at interview. The Tripos requires all applicants to achieve a minimum of A*AA or 40-42 in the IB or equivalent. Interview and testing requirements will vary by College.

To remain at Cambridge, students must normally achieve at least a Third Class Honours standard each year.

Student support

Students are supported at the College level by a Director of Studies, who oversees progress throughout their studies. Colleges also have a robust system of tutorial support, which provides pastoral care for students. At the Faculty level, the Tripos has a Management Committee with representatives from each subject area, which is responsible for general oversight of the degree. Each of the subject tracks has a Director of Undergraduate Education who oversees all aspects of teaching within that subject, and each paper is organised by a Paper Co-ordinator who organises lists of appropriate supervisors, suggested supplementary reading, and essay topics.
Graduate employability and career destinations

Recent graduates from the component Triposes have pursued careers in: research (both academic and policy research); the Civil Service, including the Foreign Office; journalism; management consultancy; museums, conservation, and heritage management; national and international NGOs and development agencies; the Law; teaching; publishing; health management; and public relations. Many students also pursue further study in graduate programmes.

Management of teaching quality and standards

Students are given regular opportunity to provide feedback on their lectures and all feedback is discussed within departments and at the Tripos Management Committee. Teaching excellence is encouraged by personnel practices. All new appointees are mentored by a suitably experience colleague. Regular 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.

In addition, 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 Tripos Management Committee and 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 Examiners’ 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.

| Easy effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the information in this programme specification. At the time of publication, the programme specification has been approved by the relevant Faculty Board (or equivalent). Programme specifications are reviewed annually, however, during the course of the academical year, any approved changes to the programme will be communicated to enrolled students through email notification or publication in the Reporter. The relevant faculty or department will endeavour to update the programme specification accordingly, and prior to the start of the next academical year. Further information about specifications and an archive of programme specifications for all awards of the University is available online at: https://www.camdata.admin.cam.ac.uk/ |