

I'm writing to you about your application to study the BA in English Language and Sociology in the School of English and the Department of Sociological Studies at the University of Sheffield. As you know, the University will be adjusting how it delivers its courses in the autumn to accommodate the social distancing measures required to combat the coronavirus pandemic. The current plans involve a blend of online delivery and face-to-face teaching in small groups in Sheffield where social distancing can be maintained. In this email, I'll explain what this will mean for your studies on the BA in English Language and Sociology.

Course content

There's no change to the overall learning outcomes of the course. You'll still obtain an advanced understanding of English Language and Sociology and a wide range of transferable skills.

Because of the challenges of managing module selection during the pandemic, the University has suspended unrestricted credits for 2020-21, where students could study any Level 1 modules, not just the options listed in the BA English Language and Sociology regulations. In place of unrestricted credits, a process of guided module choice has been set up whereby students can elect to take selected modules offered by other departments which have been identified as suitable for students in the School of English and the Department of Sociological Studies.

You'll still get to learn all about English Language and Sociology, and you'll still acquire the knowledge, understanding and academic skills you'll need for Levels 2 and 3.

Teaching

Teaching will be spread across the usual two semesters and will start the week commencing Monday 28 September.

Online delivery on this course will be through a mixture of synchronous and asynchronous activities. Asynchronous activities will involve engaging with pre-prepared materials, for example watching video recordings of your tutors, posting to discussion boards, reading texts online and completing exercises. It's not possible to social distance in a crowded lecture theatre, so content which would usually be delivered in lectures will be delivered online. Lectures are primarily presentations by one of our subject experts, and online delivery suits the format well. Materials for asynchronous activities will be made available to you through our virtual learning environment. We've been using our virtual learning environment to make course materials available for many years, but in 2020-21 we will be delivering online teaching live as well so you will be able to interact with your tutors and student peers, join in discussions, ask questions and get help.

We also plan to offer regular face-to-face sessions to all students on this course, where you will get the chance to meet with a tutor as well as other students on your course. Face-to-face sessions will take place in small groups so that we can use our larger teaching rooms and still maintain social distancing. Our face-to-face teaching has always taken place across the University's campus, and this won't change in 2020-21. Interactive classes - whether face-to-face or online - will be timetabled so that you can be sure you will be able to participate in them.

Our academic staff will be available as usual for one-to-one meetings. It may not be possible for these sessions to take place in person, but if not you'll be able to make an audio or video call.

Learning resources

Most of our learning resources (books, academic journals) are already available online, and this includes all the core reading for our Level 1 modules. Our physical libraries will be open as soon as it's safe to do so, and our librarians are committed to providing as full a service as possible, taking into account social distancing requirements and all the latest government advice.

Assessment

Coursework assignments are already completed electronically, and submitted and marked online. We're still finalising our plans for exams, but we won't be holding formal, invigilated exams in the Semester 1 exam period in January/February. It's likely we'll use an 'open book' format instead, where exam questions are made available online and you have a certain amount of time, for example two days, to answer them. You'd complete your answers electronically at home, and you'd be able to consult your books and notes. Some other universities use open book exams as a matter of course. We'll confirm the arrangements for Semester 1 exams in the individual module guides you'll receive when you join us.

Costs

The tuition fee for the course will stay the same, and we don't expect students will incur additional costs as a result of the changes we're making. You'll be able to participate in all the online activities using a regular laptop or tablet connected to the internet, although you will need a microphone and camera to contribute fully in online discussions.

I hope this email has given you an idea of what to expect when you join us in the autumn. As you'll be aware, this pandemic is a fast-moving and unpredictable phenomenon, and we might need to make further changes as the situation develops and the University responds to updates in public health guidance. Please be assured that we'll be approaching the next year as a single departmental family of staff and students together, and we're committed to ensuring that you're supported, and that you still receive a world-class university education here at Sheffield.

If you have any questions or concerns, please get in touch with us via english@sheffield.ac.uk. Please also let us know if you have any medical or personal circumstances that might affect how you're able to participate next year.

Further information

Please keep looking out for emails from the University and checking our [frequently asked questions](#), which are updated regularly with all the latest developments. We also have some on demand content from our online [applicant open days](#) which you might find useful.

I hope you enjoy what's left of the summer and stay safe,

Best wishes

Dr Ranjan Sen

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