

The Sociology Major in the Changing Landscape of Higher Education: Curriculum, Careers, and Online Learning.¹

A Report of the ASA Task Force on Liberal Learning and the Sociology Major

Instructions: Put a 3 next to recommendations that your department is doing pretty well, a 2 next to things that your department is partially doing, but not at the level you would like to see, and put a 1 next to things that your department has just begun to do, does at a nominal level, or doesn't do at all. Then total your score.

_____ **Recommendation 1:** Develop distinct mission statements, specific program goals, and measurable learning outcomes that are made public, especially to students.

_____ **Recommendation 2:** Within the sociology major, include required and elective courses that incorporate essential sociological concepts and competencies, as exemplified in the Sociological Literacy Framework.

_____ **Recommendation 3:** Include required courses in: introductory-level sociology, sociological theory, research methods, statistical analysis, substantive topic areas, and a capstone experience within the sociology major.

_____ **Recommendation 4:** Integrate progressive learning structures within the curriculum via course prerequisites that systematically guide students to engage with increasingly advanced content and activities.

_____ **Recommendation 5:** Provide multiple opportunities within the curriculum for students to engage in empirical inquiry that includes research design, data collection, and qualitative and quantitative analysis.

_____ **Recommendation 6:** Underscore, at all levels of the curriculum, inequality and difference in local, national, and global contexts.

_____ **Recommendation 7:** Provide curricular and co-curricular structures to help students gain knowledge and apply skills that support them in their post-baccalaureate careers.

_____ **Recommendation 8:** Structure the curriculum to recognize explicitly the points of intellectual convergence and divergence between sociology and other fields of inquiry.

_____ **Recommendation 9:** Incorporate multiple pedagogies across the curriculum, including those that support active learning within and beyond the classroom.

_____ **Recommendation 10:** Develop and maintain advising and mentoring processes that support students' decision making in achieving their educational goals, engage students in career planning, and offer guidance on further study in sociology and related fields.

_____ **Recommendation 11:** Support faculty engagement in disciplinary research, the scholarship of teaching and learning, pedagogical innovation, and relevant service.

_____ **Recommendation 12:** Systematically assess program goals and student learning outcomes, choosing assessment tools that respond to institutional context and specific programmatic needs.

_____ **TOTAL SCORE (highest possible 36; middle score 24; low score 12)**

¹ <http://www.asanet.org/sites/default/files/asa-booklet-2017.pdf>

The Sociological Literacy Framework

Abridged and adapted from Ferguson and Carbonaro (2016).

Developed through the Measuring College Learning Project of the SSRC.

<http://highered.ssrc.org/projects/measuring-college-learning-project/sociology/>

Instructions: Optimally students gain knowledge and skills related to the essential concepts and competencies in at least three different courses, with increasing complexity and sophistication in each course. Put a 3 next to essential concepts and competencies that a typical major will be exposed to in three or more courses with at least three levels of complexity. Put a 2 next to things that they will probably experience at TWO levels of complexity in two different courses, and a 1 next to concepts and competencies the student is likely to be exposed to just once. Put a 0 next to concepts or competencies to which the typical major is unlikely to be exposed.

Five Essential Concepts

1. _____ **The Sociological Eye.** The first essential concept in the sociological perspective is the sociological eye, a term adopted from Randall Collins (1998). Sociology students should be able to delineate the major theoretical frameworks and distinctive concepts and assumptions upon which our discipline is grounded and that differentiate it from other social sciences.
2. _____ **Social Structure.** Students of sociology also should be able to describe social structure and how structural forces affect human action and social life at the micro, meso, and macro levels of society. More specifically, sociology students should be able to distinguish important social institutions in society that make up the social structure, and how they affect individuals and each other.
3. _____ **Socialization.** Students of sociology should be able to explicate the relationship between the self and society, particularly how the self is social constructed and maintained at multiple levels of society.
4. _____ **Stratification.** The essential concept of stratification comprises the different forms of social inequality in human societies and the processes through which they are established and operate.
5. _____ **Social change and social reproduction.** Sociology students also should be able to identify the social processes underpinning social change and to describe how demographic and other types of social change affect individuals and social structures.

Six Essential Competencies

1. _____ **Apply Sociological Theories to Understand Social Phenomena.** Sociology students should be able to move beyond folk explanations of social phenomena and instead invoke evidence-based theories of sociological phenomena.
2. _____ **Critically Evaluate Explanations of Human Behavior and Social Phenomena.** Sociology students should be able to describe the role of theory in building social knowledge and evaluate the limitations of different theoretical frameworks.
3. _____ **Apply Scientific Principles to Understand the Social World.** Sociology students should not only be able to describe the role of social research methods in building sociological knowledge, but be able to identify major methodological approaches and the design of doing research including sampling, measurement, and data collection. Students should learn to conduct and critique empirical research through the articulation of the effective use of evidence, the generation of research questions or hypotheses from sociological theories and concepts, and the recognition of the limits of the scientific method in understanding social behavior.
4. _____ **Evaluate the Quality of Social Scientific Methods and Data.** Students should be able to critically assess the empirical sociological research of others and be able to identify the assumptions and limitations underlying particular research methodologies in sociology. The particular characteristics that sociologists use to evaluate

the quality of research methods and data sources include: operationalization of variables; learning the importance of precision; reliability and validity of data sources; and understanding the differences between probability and non-probability samples.

5. _____ **Rigorously Analyze Social Scientific Data.** Students should be able to articulate and apply disciplinary standards for data analysis and also delineate the differing goals, strengths, and limitations of different modes of analysis.
6. _____ **Use Sociological Knowledge to Inform Policy Debates and Promote Public Understanding.** Sociology students who are able to use all of the essential concepts and competencies of the Sociological Literacy Framework are better prepared to engage with and have an impact upon the world in which they live and work... This essential competency suggest that sociology students should understand the kind of work sociologists do, including an awareness of how sociology is used in applied settings, and the value of sociological skills in the workplace.

Note: This activity can be modified to engage a group of faculty members in mapping learning outcomes to program course offerings. To do this, ask faculty to read over the list of concepts and competencies and think about the material they cover in their own courses. If they address a concept or competency in a course, ask them to write down the name/number of that course next to the concept or competency. Optimally, if you compile the results across all faculty, each concept and competency will be covered in at least three different courses with three levels of sophistication.