



Department of Social Sciences
Sociology · Political Science · Communication and Media Studies

BA Social Sciences



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General Introduction

The BA programme in Social Sciences is an interdisciplinary study programme combining sociology, political science and communication and media studies. This study programme has been officially accredited by the Ministry of Education and Science of the State Government of North Rhine-Westphalia, Germany. In 2003, the BA and MA study programmes in Social Sciences were awarded the distinguished prize for the best German BA/MA study programmes by the Stifterverband für die Deutsche Wissenschaft (Donor's Association for the Promotion of Sciences and Humanities in Germany), a joint industry initiative of leading German enterprises for the promotion of science and scholarship.

In very general terms, the BA programme in Social Sciences focuses on contemporary problems of modern society. It aims to impart substantial knowledge of the disciplines involved and provides methods to extend and deepen this knowledge. From different, albeit mutually supportive theoretical and methodical perspectives students gain differentiated insights into today's social reality facilitating a critical analysis of contemporary society.

Topics of the courses include the analyses of basic social norms and institutions, the social structure of society, political systems and processes in different issue areas, and the fundamental role that information and communication media play in modern society. In addition, the module *European and International Studies* takes into account the major changes on the international level, especially the European integration process.

The integrated BA programme in Social Sciences has been designed to give students a broad educational background for those professional areas in which a comprehensive and methodologically sound understanding of social reality and its formative social, political and communicative processes is a prerequisite for professional work. Students will be prepared for careers in planning, adult education, and human resource development, marketing and advertising, market and opinion research, public relations and media consulting in government, public administrations, political parties, industrial organisations, business, media companies, interest groups, international organisations, NGO's and cultural and political institutions.

Study Profile

The BA programme comprises three years of full-time study. The special features and aims of the programme are as follows

- to introduce students to basic theories and major research results in sociology, political science, media and communication studies
- to provide training in empirical research and in methods of analysis and explanation including survey techniques, aggregate data analyses and multivariate statistical methods
- to improve communication skills and the use of modern media
- to promote teamwork and social competence
- to prepare students for professional jobs by three months of compulsory work-placements including preparation and evaluation courses given by professional experts.

The Interdisciplinary Approach

The programme is based on the strong theoretical and methodological links between the three disciplines involved. This not only justifies a joint BA programme in Social Sciences but also creates a specific profile leading to a qualified academic degree after three years of study. The systematic integration of the three disciplines is reflected in the course structure

- common methodological training combined with applied empirical study projects
- key qualifications and practical experiences in joint courses and practical training
- thematic modules focusing on specific issues in which the insights and perspectives of the three disciplines are combined.



Theory and Practice

Practice-oriented courses and three months of work-placement are core elements of the programme.

The work placements introduce students to professional working fields where they learn to apply theories and methods. Furthermore, students acquire practical competence which enhances employability. The Institute of Social Sciences has established a professional office which arranges internships and work-placements, supervises the students, gives advice regarding a job-oriented study plan and informs on job-market perspectives. In addition external instructors from different professional fields offer practice-oriented courses.

Programme Structure

The programme structure is based on modules combining thematically, methodically and systematically related courses. The study programme covers three *basic modules*, five *thematic modules*, three *method modules*, three *practice modules*, and supplementary *elective modules* or *courses*. *Basic modules* give an introduction to the respective disciplines. *Thematic modules* cover topics that are relevant to all of the disciplines involved. *Method modules* are designed to train students in the methods and techniques of empirical social research. *Practice modules* aim at the acquirement of key academic and professional qualifications and the application of academic knowledge in different professional fields. *Elective modules* can be chosen from other disciplines.

The programme consists of three years of study. During the first year, students take a total of 38 semester hours, during the second year 32 semester hours, and 26 semester hours during the final year.

Course Contents

Basic Modules

Introductory lectures: basic theories and methods in sociology, political science, media and communication studies.

Basic courses: consolidation of the subjects of the introductory lectures.

Thematic modules

The Individual and Society • individual and collective action • education and socialisation • participation and interest mediation • political culture • media images and media effects.

Systems and Structures • social systems and social structure • social norms and institutions • political systems • comparative politics • mass communication systems.

Areas and Processes • sociology of law, economics, and culture • social policy, economic policy, cultural policy • media and economics • journalism and public relations.

Media and Communication • interaction and communication • information society and mass media • public and political communication • mass media interrelationships.

European and International Studies • comparative analysis of social structures • globalisation • European politics and European integration • international relations • comparative analysis of media systems.

- Method Modules**
- Data collection** • history of empirical social research • types and problems of data collection • survey techniques • content analysis • research design.
 - Methods of analysis** • theory of measurement • uni-, bi- and multivariate data analysis • descriptive and inference statistics • qualitative social research.
 - Research project** • practice-oriented empirical projects.
- Practice Modules**
- Introduction to study and research skills** • essay writing • using libraries and traditional archives • analysing texts • using Internet sources.
 - Data processing/multimedia** • data processing, statistical packages • graphic presentations • internet use • information systems
 - Communication skills** • academic argumentation and discussion • oral presentation • moderation • interviewing techniques.
 - Work placement preparatory courses** • discussion of theory-practice problems (together with faculty members and professional experts).
 - Work placement** • suggested areas for work-placements include: consultant companies, market research institutes, public relation companies, private and public administration, political parties, interest groups, NGO's, media.
 - Work-placement evaluation course** • discussion and critical reflection of experience gained during the work placement.
 - Language courses** • practical training in a foreign language.
 - Elective Modules** • courses or modules of other disciplines.

Types of Courses

Different types of courses are offered • *lectures* introduce students to theories and methods of the three disciplines and advise them how to deepen the acquired knowledge on their own • *exercises* are designed to train students in academic skills • *basic courses* introduce students to academic work on topics of the three disciplines • *core courses* focus on intensive discussions about specific disciplinary topics. These courses give students the opportunity to improve their academic proficiency and to present their own research findings • *advanced courses* offer students the opportunity to research, present and discuss a topic independently. The courses are also designed to help students prepare their BA thesis • *research projects* are designed to enable students to apply academic theories and methods in teamwork • *work-placement preparation courses* cover practical topics of professional fields in the social sciences. They will be conducted in cooperation with experts from business, culture, or politics • *work-placement evaluation courses* give students the opportunity to reflect their practical experience. Students are also advised how to proceed with their studies • *language courses* help to improve job-oriented proficiency in at least one foreign language.

Work-Placement

A work-placement of three months in total must be completed during the first and second year. It may be split up, but each part should cover at least a period of one month. The work-placements provide students with professional experience of how to apply the social sciences and may influence their choice of courses or the dissertation topic. In addition, it is expected that the work-placements help students with regard to their job orientation. Students must submit a written report on their work-placements.

Overview of the Study Programme

Year 1	Basic modules	2 introductory lectures and 2 basic courses in sociology, political science and communication and media studies
	Method modules	2 lectures on data collection
	Practice modules	1 exercise: introduction to research and study skills
		1 exercise: data processing/multimedia
		1 exercise: communication skills
Elective module	1 core course	
Year 2	Thematic modules	10 core courses from five thematic modules
	Method modules	2 lectures on statistical methods
	Practice modules	1 work-placement preparation course
	Elective module	3 core courses
	Work-Placement	3 months during the semester breaks
Year 3	Thematic modules	5 advanced courses from five thematic modules
	Method modules	1 research project
	Practice modules	1 Work-placement evaluation course
	Elective module	5 advanced courses
	BA Thesis	3 months during the course of study

Credit Points

Students earn credit points for each course attended and each examination passed. One credit point is equivalent to one ECTS credit point (see page 11 for information on ECTS). The BA programme consists of a total of 180 ECTS credits, which is equivalent to an average of 30 credits per semester. The number of points credited for a course depends on the required course work • 2 ECTS credit points for regular active participation in an exercise or course without final examination • 4 ECTS credit points for a lecture plus final examination • 6 ECTS credit points for a core course plus final examination • 8 ECTS credits for an advanced course plus final examination • 16 ECTS credit points for the work-placement plus final report • 12 ECTS credit points for the BA thesis.

Examinations

The Bachelor of Arts degree is awarded to students who have completed their work-placement, have successfully passed the final examinations of all required courses and whose BA thesis has been accepted. The students can choose German or English as the language of an examination or of their thesis.

According to the examination regulations, final course examinations can be a written or an oral exam, a seminar paper, a research paper with oral presentation or a study project.

Students must demonstrate their skills and knowledge acquired in a given course

- a *written exam* usually lasts 90 minutes. If appropriate, it may be extended to a maximum of 180 minutes
- an *oral exam* usually lasts 20 to 30 minutes

- a *seminar paper* is a written analysis of a given topic of a course. It should be of 3,000 to 6,000 words
- a *research paper* with oral presentation comprises an oral presentation of 15 to 30 minutes and a paper of 1,500 to 4,500 words on a specific topic in a given course
- *project work* involves the application of empirical and statistical methods to a course topic including an oral presentation of 15 to 30 minutes and/or a written resume of 1,500 to 7,500 words.

Project work may also be assessed by a written test of 60 minutes.

The BA thesis is usually written during the final year and must be completed within three months.

Students may propose the topic which should be related to the contents of an advanced course. The thesis must demonstrate the student's ability to conduct research on a given topic according to the standards of the social sciences and to present his or her results in an appropriate way. The BA thesis can be written either in German or English. It should comprise of 9,000 to 15,000 words and will be assessed by two examiners.

Grading

Each examination will be assessed according to the following scale:

1 = very good	excellent performance
2 = good	performance above average
3 = satisfactory	average performance
4 = sufficient	performance with deficits, but still acceptable
5 = fail	performance with substantial deficits, not acceptable

Study Plan

	Types of Course	Module	Hours / Credits
Year 1	Semester 1		
	Exercise	Data Processing/Multimedia	2 / 2
	Exercise	Communication Skills	2 / 2
	Exercise	Research and study skills	2 / 2
	Exercise	Language	2 / 2
	Lecture	Sociology	2 / 4
	Lecture	Political Science	2 / 4
	Lecture	Communication and Media Studies	2 / 4
	Lecture	Data Collection	2 / 4
	Basic course	Sociology	2 / 2
	Basic course	Political Science	2 / 2
	Basic course	Communication and Media Studies	2 / 2
	Semester 2		
	Lecture	Sociology	2 / 4
	Lecture	Political Science	2 / 4
	Lecture	Communication and Media Studies	2 / 4
	Lecture	Data Collection	2 / 4
	Basic course	Sociology	2 / 2
	Basic course	Political Science	2 / 2
	Basic course	Communication and Media Studies	2 / 2
Core course	Elective	2 / 2	
Year 2	Semester 3		
	Lecture	Statistical Methods	2 / 6
	Core course	The Individual and Society	2 / 2 or 6
	Core course	Systems and Structures	2 / 2 or 6
	Core course	Areas and Processes	2 / 2 or 6
	Core course	Media and Communication	2 / 2 or 6
	Core course	European and International Studies	2 / 2 or 6
	Core courses	Elective	4 / 4
	Semester 4		
	Lecture	Statistical Methods	2 / 6
	Core course	The Individual and Society	2 / 2 or 6
	Core course	Systems and Structures	2 / 2 or 6
	Core course	Areas and Processes	2 / 2 or 6
	Core course	Media and Communication	2 / 2 or 6
	Core course	European and International Studies	2 / 2 or 6
	Core course	Elective	2 / 2
	Preparatory course	Work-Placement Preparation	2 / 2
	Work-Placement	3 months / 15	
Year 3	Semester 5		
	Advanced course	The Individual and Society	2 / 2 or 8
	Advanced course	Systems and Structures	2 / 2 or 8
	Advanced course	Areas and Processes	2 / 2 or 8
	Advanced course	Media and Communication	2 / 2 or 8
	Advanced courses	Elective	6 / 6
	Research project	Project Work	4 / 10
	Monitoring course	Work-Placement Evaluation	2 / 2
	Semester 6		
	Advanced course	European and International Studies	2 / 2 or 8
	Advanced courses	Elective	4 / 4
BA Thesis		3 months / 12	

Additional Information

The City and the Region

Düsseldorf is the capital of Germany's most populous federal state, North Rhine-Westphalia. Historically, the river Rhine has been Düsseldorf's natural link across borders. It has provided not only excellent trade opportunities but also brought about an extensive exchange of ideas, which, in turn, gave rise to the friendliness and open-mindedness that are characteristic of the people from the Rhineland.

From Düsseldorf, it takes an hour to the Dutch border by car, and three hours to reach the North Sea. There is an extensive highway system around the city, and trans-European trains leave the central train station every hour. Situated geographically and economically at the heart of Western Europe, the state capital with a population of 575,000 has built up strong international ties and has established itself as an important economic, academic, and cultural partner within the European Union. Düsseldorf is an internationally renowned banking centre and the home of continental Europe's largest Japanese expatriate community. Numerous industrial designers, product developers, commercial artists, and advertising agencies form a lively community of creative entrepreneurs. The new and growing Harbour Media Centre provides the location for many companies which are engaged in communication and information technology. Electronics firms and start-up companies of the new economy also feature prominently in the city's business landscape. Düsseldorf's famous fashion industry contributes to the charm and "joie de vivre" of the city.

In the summer, the city's elegant main boulevard known as the "Kö" (Königsallee) turns into a vast café, a place to see and be seen. Other tree-lined promenades, interspersed with beer gardens, offer inviting places to stroll and watch the boats on the Rhine or look at the eye-catching examples of Art Nouveau facades on the opposite bank of the river. Extensive parks provide grounds for sports activities as well as a setting for the annual "Biggest Fun Fair" on the Rhine. The Old Town district, which is still being carefully preserved, is a popular entertainment zone and one of Düsseldorf's most extensive pedestrian areas. It abounds with narrow alleys, restaurants, cafes and pubs. In the early 17th century under the reign of Johann Wilhelm of the Palatinate (better known to the man in the street as Jan Wellem), the town began to thrive, laying the foundations for the rich and multifaceted cultural life that can be found today. The "German Opera" offers a classical and modern repertoire and remarkable ballet performances. There is also a lively theatre scene with an internationally renowned playhouse at its hub, a political cabaret, and numerous studio theatres as well as many busy art galleries. The concert hall stands out for its artistic design as well as its varied music programme. All aspects of modern art are very well represented at the State Art Collection, and the Düsseldorf Academy of Fine Arts is one of the three leading art schools in Germany.

Besides the Heinrich-Heine-University and the Academy of Fine Arts, Düsseldorf is the home of a number of research institutes and educational facilities, among which are the Robert Schumann Conservatory, the University of Applied Sciences, and the Academy of Business Administration.



The University

The Heinrich-Heine-University of Düsseldorf is situated in the south of the city on a large and pleasant campus site. It was founded initially as a Medical Academy in 1907 at the same time as the Municipal Hospital and together they constituted the most modern hospital complex of Imperial Germany. Since the Academy did not have university status, it was allowed to instruct medical trainees but not students. The academy itself and the citizens of Düsseldorf launched several initiatives to change the status and in 1923 they finally succeeded. A university constitution providing the right to train students was passed, the study of dental medicine was subsequently incorporated, and since 1935 doctoral degrees can be awarded. After the Second World War, the federal state of North Rhine-Westphalia and the City of Düsseldorf signed a contract stating that the federal state was to be responsible for the Medical Academy, while the hospitals were to remain municipally owned. In November 1965, the Medical Academy became the University of Düsseldorf, and in January 1966, the University established the Faculty of Arts and Natural Sciences in addition to the Faculty of Medicine. Since then the University has grown continuously both in terms of student population and subject diversity. Today approx. 20,000 students can choose from a large range of disciplines, now also including economics, law, social sciences and humanities. In December 1988 the academic senate decided to rename the University the Heinrich-Heine-University in commemoration of one of the city's most renowned sons, the Romantic poet and political writer Heinrich Heine whose work transcended national borders in the 19th century. Today the Heinrich-Heine-University has an outstanding academic reputation despite its fairly recent foundation. Although faced with nation-wide cuts in public university funding, the University of Düsseldorf has continued to thrive. The university's international profile results from lively exchange programmes both on student and staff level with partner universities in regions as diverse as California and Beijing, Reading and Naples.



The European Community Course Credit System (ECTS)

This is a system based on allocation and transfer of academic credits. It was developed and tested in a pilot scheme by 145 European institutions of higher education in all EU member States and EFTA countries. ECTS was developed as an instrument to improve academic co-operation between European universities by means of an effective and general procedure. ECTS serves as a model of academic recognition, as it provides greater transparency regarding study programmes and student achievements. ECTS in no way regulates the content, structure and/or equivalence of study programmes. These are issues of quality which are to be determined by the higher education institutions themselves. ECTS-Credits are allocated to each course unit. 60 credits represent the workload of an academic year of study. Each institution produces an information package as a guide to all courses available to ECTS students. Students receive a transcript of records listing all successfully completed courses, together with a diploma supplement. The diploma supplement comprises all information about the structure and content of the study programme which is relevant for academic exchange and academic or vocational applications.





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