

Sociology Project Handbook

**For Students in 3rd year during 2020-21
and 4th year during 2021-22**

SCIL 10045

40 credits



Image from: <https://www.hstatga.org/the-start-of-a-thesis-project/>

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The Project

The project is an important part of your degree programme - and not just because it is one of its more time-consuming aspects! The project enables you to pursue in some depth a topic of your own choice. It is your most important chance to DO sociology, not just read about it. You will be expected to demonstrate your ability to engage critically and analytically with literature from your chosen field and build upon conceptual, theoretical and methodological material in the taught elements of your degree. The Project begins in the December of Junior Honours and ends in December of Senior Honours. The Colin Bell Prize is awarded to the best Sociology Project each year.

The business of selecting a topic, deciding how to go about investigating your chosen subject, collecting material, keeping a diary, analysing your data and writing your report are all vital ingredients of DOING sociology rather than simply reading other people's research reports. Students generally find that tackling the project gives them insight into the challenges and pitfalls of doing sociological research, and that this helps them develop a more critical approach to their reading for the degree programme in general. Most students find the project one of the most rewarding parts of their studies at Honours level. This document is your essential guide to doing the project and contains vital information. Please read it and keep referring back to it when necessary.

We are regularly updating the guidelines on project work in the light of developments with Covid19 in the U.K. Please look for further announcements on Learn or via email.

Key Information

Learn Site: Sociology Project Preparation course (**SCIL10091**) **NB: this course code is for the preparation course only, not the project itself which has a course code of SCIL 10045.**

Deadline: ***MIDNIGHT ON WEDNESDAY 8th December 2021.***

Assessment Weighting: The project report and diary make up 100% of the mark for this course.

Contact details:

Course Convener: Professor Nick Prior	Course Secretary: Ewen Miller
Email: n.prior@ed.ac.uk , Phone: 0131 650 3991	Email: Ewen.Miller@ed.ac.uk
Office: 21 Buccleuch Place, Room 4.04	
Feedback and Guidance Hours: Thursdays 9am-11am	

Contact Hours: This course does not have regular lectures. Rather your contact hours for the course come in two ways:

- Through a sequence of Project Preparation sessions that run at various points during the project lifecycle. When these run they are typically scheduled for Wednesday afternoons. For more information on these look out for announcements and check the Learn page of the project preparation course.
- Individual supervision by a member of staff. For more on this see section 5 below.

Course time-span: Students are required to work on this course from semester 1 in 3rd year to the end of semester 1 in 4th year. The course will appear on the student's EUCLID record in 4th year, and is worth 40 credits.

Return of Feedback: As the sociology project is a 40 credit course, is 10,000 words in length (plus the diary), and is double-marked, return of feedback will take 30 working days. Please note that the university is closed over Christmas and the 30 working days excludes the period of closure.

Joint Honours Students: Most Joint and 'With' degrees require a project as part of the curriculum, although most allow you to choose whether to do a project in Sociology or your other degree subject. If you choose to do the project in another subject, make sure you are aware of what this project entails, as the requirements may differ from the Sociology project. **Students doing joint honours degrees, who have a choice about whether or not to do their project in Sociology, must make a final decision by Friday 11th December 2020, at the latest.** If you may be doing a Sociology Project you must attend the first Project Preparation Session which introduces you to the project (details to follow).

Joint students with Law may NOT do a Sociology Project. Students taking the joint degree with Psychology must do their Project in Psychology if they wish their degree to be recognised by the British Psychological Society (BPS), and should ensure that their curriculum is in other ways compliant with BPS requirements (see your Psychology 3rd and 4th year Handbooks).

1) Planning Your Project

Two reputable guides to doing undergraduate projects with a specific focus on social research are:

Karen Smith et al., *Doing Your Undergraduate Social Science Dissertation* (London: Routledge, 2009)

Colin Robson, *How to Do a Research Project: A Guide for Undergraduate Students* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007). Both books are available in the Library, and you may also access the website associated with the second here (www.blackwellpublishing.com/researchproject).

Another accessible guide to planning and conducting an undergraduate dissertation in the Social Sciences is:

Nicholas Walliman, *Your Undergraduate Dissertation* (London: Sage, 2004), the final chapter of Alan Bryman, *Social Research Methods* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2001 and 2004). This offers excellent guidance on preparing a dissertation based on a relatively small-scale research project.

Useful practical advice can be found in:

Martyn Denscombe, *The Good Research Guide* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1998).

More sophisticated reflections can be found:

Howard S. Becker, *Tricks of the Trade: How to Think about your Research while you're doing it* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1998).

An excellent online resource for Social Science students doing undergraduate dissertations can be accessed at www.socscidiss.bham.ac.uk (the Smith et al book is based on the site).

You must have a clear idea of what you are planning to do and prepare a realistic timetable for your work early in your project. Different topics require different approaches and different

people work in different ways. Nevertheless, there are common activities for all projects and time management is crucial to successful project work.

Project Timeline for Students

Time	Project Activity
Semester 1 Junior Honours	
Weeks 1-5	Start thinking about areas of sociology that you might like to investigate in the project
Weeks 5-13	Contact potential supervisors and discuss project area, working to narrow this down to a specific topic
	Start writing project diary
Week 13	Deadline: Friday 11th December 2020 Register supervisor and provisional project title
	Deadline: Friday 11th December 2020 Joint honours students must commit to the Sociology project or withdraw
Semester 2 Junior Honours	
Weeks 1-4	Initial reading (taking notes, recording bibliographic details, and reflecting on your reading)
Weeks 5-10	Continue reading relevant materials and write your Research Proposal. Such materials include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existing research in the area • Relevant theoretical work • Relevant writing on methodology and ethics
	Complete Ethical Audit with supervisor
Week 10	Deadline: Monday 29th March 2021. Submit Research Proposal to supervisor and complete Ethical Audit
Week 12 Junior Honours until start of 1 st semester senior honours	Once the Research Proposal and Ethical audit are agreed by your supervisor (and honours convener if the research is 'Level 2' in relation to ethics): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct all fieldwork and data collection • Prepare data for analysis – e.g. transcribe interviews, compile field-notes
Semester 1 Senior Honours	
Weeks 1-4	Undertake and complete analysis of data
Weeks 1-9	Write drafts of main sections of the project and submit to supervisor for comment: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction and literature review • Methods • Findings/Analysis • Conclusion
Weeks 4-9	Revise sections on the basis of feedback from your supervisor
Monday of Week 10	Deadline: Final date for submitting material to supervisor for feedback. Feedback will be provided by Friday of Week 11
Week 10-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make final revisions to main sections • Complete diary and other material including title-page, abstract, bibliography, appendices
8 th December 2021	Deadline: Submit final version of the project for assessment

2) Choosing Your Topic

Your choice of topic should be based on **your own interests**, what subjects staff can supervise and what is feasible in terms of the literature, time and resources available. Your project must have a **clear focus** and definable boundaries. You will do a better job on a **fairly narrow topic** than on one that is too broad-ranging. You will be expected to draw upon existing **sociological literature**, but you cannot **just** do that: **a project is not just another long-essay**.

The project has to involve research activity on your part. Possible types of research include:

- Collecting and analysing your own data from the 'real world', using methods such as interviews, participant observation, virtual ethnography or questionnaires.
- Documentary research using approaches such as discourse analysis, self-reflection, and semiology.
- Research that studies digital culture or social media.
- Re-analysing data that has already been collected, either qualitative or quantitative. In the latter case this does **not** mean simply taking tables from published work: it means getting hold of the original data and performing your own analysis (see below).
- Investigating a theoretical issue in-depth using primary sources (see below)
- Historical, institutional or comparative projects, e.g. studying why an institution developed as it did over time. For these kinds of projects it will be helpful to look beyond existing academic sources, and consult e.g. government reports, reports issued by institutions etc.

NB: Official guidance on what is permissible as far as conducting primary research is concerned and the form that the report will take is changing as a result of Covid-19, so please look out for further announcements on this.

If you are concerned that the work you are doing does not have a substantial research component – for example, if you feel that you are only reviewing and discussing literature in much the same way you would with a long-essay – seek guidance from your supervisor.

No fixed rules are possible for what counts as 'enough' research work (consult your supervisor for advice), but the following are rough rules of thumb for those doing interview or questionnaire work. If you are doing in-depth, semi-structured, interviews around an hour long, aim for around 15 interviews. If using fixed response questionnaires for statistical analysis, aim for at least 100 completed questionnaires. If, for example, you are studying a group of people to whom getting access is hard, you may find that you cannot reach these numbers: consult your supervisor, who can draw upon their professional judgement and experience to advise you on how many interviews/questionnaires are adequate.

If you are using a questionnaire or structured interviews, you may find this 'question bank' useful <http://discover.ukdataservice.ac.uk/variables>. There is nothing wrong in re-using questions used in previous surveys: indeed, it is often a good idea, since your results can then be compared directly with those of previous work. Even the precise form of words from previous surveys can be used so long as you acknowledge in your Project Report that you have done this (and cite the source): it is not plagiarism.

If you intend to reanalyse survey data, we recommend that you register with the UK Data Archive (www.data-archive.ac.uk). This archive offers free access to data from all the major social, economic and political surveys carried out in the UK, and a great many other surveys as well. The archive also offers a gateway to non-UK data. You can search for topics that

are of interest to you, and many of the data sets can be downloaded instantly to your desktop.

No matter what kind of project you choose to do, remember that this is a sociological project. It is, for example, not enough simply to investigate a social problem, however important. Your project report has to demonstrate how sociological ideas illuminate your project and how the primary research you have done adds to our sociological understanding of the topic.

Learning how to handle issues such as the relationship between your primary research and sociological thinking is a vital part of learning the sociologist's 'tradecraft'. **You should start thinking about your project topic early in Junior Honours.** You may discuss your ideas with the Project Convenor, who can help you to focus your ideas and suggest a member of staff who would be a suitable person to supervise your topic. To help you select a supervisor, see the sociology staff web pages where you will find information about their research interests and methodological skills (<http://www.sociology.ed.ac.uk/people/staff>). In the early planning stage you should scan as many sources and talk to as many people (your peers as well as staff members) as possible. **Your project title and research design must, however, be developed in conjunction with a supervisor.**

Project archive: Sociology keeps a digital archive of projects from previous years which we make available on the project preparation Learn site.

3) Project Preparation Sessions (Semesters 1 & 2)

Junior Honours students attend several sessions in order to prepare them for their Sociology Honours Project. These sessions provide students with information that is essential to their Project work and attendance is therefore an **essential** requirement for all Single Honours students and for all Joint Honours students who intend to do a Sociology Project or have yet to decide. The sessions lead up to the submission of a **compulsory** Research Proposal document in the second semester of Junior Honours year.

The details of the sessions will be announced on the Learn site (SCIL 10091, 'Sociology Project Preparation Course 2020-2021'). They will typically cover: an introduction to the project which will help clarify what is required of you, how to approach the research proposal and how to identify and arrange an appropriate supervisor; what doing a sociology project is really like; choice of methods; how to make justified and sensible choices about data collection, including the use of qualitative or quantitative data; how to do a literature search; analysing data; tips for writing up the different sections; troubleshooting and student Q&A.

Please look out for an email about the arrangements for these sessions. Reminders will also be sent to you via your Edinburgh University email account.

4) Project Registration

You must register your project title and supervisor's name by email to Ewen Miller - Ewen.miller@ed.ac.uk - by **Friday 11th December 2020**.

5) Project Supervision

Students **must** be supervised by a member of staff from Sociology. The role of the supervisor is to:

1. Guide you in focusing the study and ensuring that it is feasible, in terms of time, expenditure and competence.
2. Help you draw up a plan and timetable for your work.
3. Help you to ensure the adequacy of the research design and the procedures for collecting data. Supervisors can be consulted about data analysis, but should not directly be involved in, or be responsible for, the analysis itself.
4. Help you to conduct a satisfactory ethical audit.
5. Help you to obtain access to data (providing supporting documentation to any organisation or institution if entry, interviewing etc. are needed).
6. Discuss and eventually agree the organisation, arrangement and presentation of the project report.
7. Read and make general comments on draft chapters of the project report.

Note that your supervisor will **not** grade your project report.

It is up to students to approach staff about project supervision via email. Please note that each member of staff is limited in the number of students he or she can take on for workload reasons and not all staff supervise projects in any year. Available supervisors will be confirmed at the first Project Preparation meeting. Supervisor allocation is on a first-come first-served basis.

It is **your responsibility** to make sure that you see your supervisor at regular intervals. We recommend that, during semesters, you meet with your supervisor once every 2-3 weeks. Appointments in the vacations can be made at mutual convenience although you should **expect that your supervisor will be out of contact in July except for emergencies**. Depending on the individual supervisor and/or the particular stage of the project, s/he may prefer to hold group meetings with a number of supervised students or to see you individually. If you are planning to work on your project in the summer vacation, check with your supervisor before the end of the academic year that s/he or a substitute will be available. **It's wise to book your next appointment as you are finishing your current one. We reiterate that it is your responsibility, not your supervisor's, to make appointments.**

For the supervisory relationship to work well it is important to keep these appointments, to keep your supervisor informed about your progress and to hand in material by agreed times. For their part, supervisors have the responsibility to meet with you at the times agreed, and to respond appropriately and promptly (making constructive suggestions at the planning stage, reading and commenting on the material that you submit, etc.). If students continually fail to arrange or keep to appointments, or to hand in material as agreed, then we reserve the right to **withdraw supervision from the project. If supervision issues arise that you cannot resolve with your supervisor, contact the Project Convener immediately so that they can be sorted out in a timely fashion. If the Project Convener is your supervisor, please contact your Personal Tutor or Head of Subject.**

Feedback on written drafts of the project report in the period leading up to completion and submission can be particularly valuable, and again you are entitled to expect this from your supervisor. But equally, it is your responsibility to give your supervisor adequate time to do this. Some supervisors prefer to see drafts of sections of the report one at a time, others want to see the entire final draft in one go. Either way, except in exceptional circumstances, **the FINAL DATE by which you may submit ANY material for feedback from your supervisor is the Monday of Week 10, Semester 1 of Senior Honours**. Your supervisor will provide feedback by the Friday of Week 11. No further feedback will be provided after this date. Please note that supervisors will provide feedback only on the main text of your project – they cannot be expected to proof your bibliography, check that you have inserted

page numbers and followed the instructions contained in this Handbook about how to present your material!

Note: In order to balance staff workloads, we occasionally have to allocate re-students to different supervisors soon after the initial registration. In addition, because staff tend to take research sabbaticals every few years (or because they sometimes move on to other universities), it is not always possible for you to have the same supervisor for the whole year of your project. In such instances, you will be assigned, and informed about, a replacement supervisor. Although students sometimes find this a little unsettling initially, they generally find that the new supervisor is equally committed to helping them with their project, and in fact often introduces useful new ideas and suggestions.

6) The Project Diary

The **DIARY** is an integral part of your project. **WRITE YOUR DIARY ON A WEEK-BY-WEEK BASIS** from the *very first discussion* of your project whether with your supervisor or with anyone else *until the time when you submit* the project report and diary.

The diary must be word-processed so that it can be submitted electronically with the Project.

Be sure to consult your supervisor about the correct format and content of the Diary.

The Diary is a record of your discussions with your supervisor (and any other relevant conversations), your own decision-making about research design, time-management and the progress you made in keeping to plan. Record the research process, plans for future work, ideas and field observations which may be useful later in your analysis, changes in direction and emphasis, comments on literature you have read and found particularly useful, bibliographic and other sources you used, writing up, and any difficulties you face, etc. It can also include your own feelings - of elation or exasperation - as the project unfolds.

The Diary plays a role in the **assessment process**, especially if projects run into unforeseen difficulties. The Diary will be assessed anonymously, so please **do not include in it information that makes it clear who you are, and also be careful to respect the confidentiality and anonymity of respondents.**

Remember that the diary is supplementary to the project report. Do not repeat material covered in the report in the diary. Although around 3,000 words will usually be enough, there is no formal word limit for the diary. It is difficult to impose this on something which is an ongoing enterprise and it would be unfair to ask people to cut out material that might be relevant just so that they can meet some arbitrary word length. However, this should not be a license to submit something excessive, or to use the diary for material that properly belongs in the main report (e.g. descriptions of your research design, your findings and conclusions). We do read your diaries so please try to be reasonably concise and avoid including material that is not strictly relevant to the progress of your thinking and research.

7) The Research Proposal and Ethical Audit

The Research Proposal and Ethical Audit are fundamental and compulsory elements of the Project for all students. They should be **submitted to your project supervisor by Monday 29th March 2021.**

NB: Failure to submit the Research Proposal and Ethical Audit will have serious consequences. We cannot sanction or take responsibility for any research activity until the Research Proposal and Ethical Audit have been completed. We shall therefore refuse to supervise any project that is not supported by a satisfactory Research Proposal and Ethical

Audit. Projects submitted for examination that have been completed unsupervised and unsupported by a Research Proposal and ethical audit will incur substantial penalties. Under exceptional circumstances, your supervisor may extend the deadline for submission (e.g. to take account of unforeseen complications or a necessary change of direction), but the deadline cannot be extended indefinitely.

a) The Research Proposal

The Research Proposal is a document of around 1500 words. Writing the Research Proposal is of great benefit to both you and your supervisor and you should prepare it in collaboration with your supervisor:

- It enables you to think carefully about your research methods and strategies and to explain them coherently.
- It gives supervisors an adequately full picture of your intentions, which helps them to make suggestions about any initial changes you may like to make and gives them a basis upon which to offer continued support and guidance.
- It usually forms the basis of your description of methods in your final project report.
- It allows you and your supervisor to complete a satisfactory Ethical Audit (see below).

The Research Proposal should contain the following elements:

- What is the topic of the research project and why has this been chosen?
- A brief review of some relevant literature. This need not be extensive or describe the literature in detail. It should include an explanation of what bibliographic databases and searches were used to source relevant material.
- What are the principal aims of the research? What questions is your research intended to answer?
- What methods will be used to realise these aims? Why have these methods been chosen and not others? If you propose to do a project which does not involve the collection of 'data' as most commonly understood (e.g. if you are using a more 'interpretive' approach or doing library based work such as investigating the work of theorists), you are still required to describe and justify your proposed strategy for carrying out the research.
- Are there any foreseeable limitations on the research (e.g. difficulties in negotiating access; limitations on the nature or size of the sample) and how will these be addressed?
- What ethical issues does the research raise and how will these be addressed? Whatever kind of project you choose to do your Research Proposal must demonstrate that you have considered any ethical implications. In some cases, this will require no more than a few words explaining why the project does not entail any potential ethical problems, but in other instances a more lengthy discussion of ethical issues will be required, and this will form the basis of the mandatory ethical audit.
- A plan of your timetable for doing the data collection and writing up the project.

b) The Ethical Audit and Permission Issues

The School of Social and Political Science attaches great importance to addressing the ethical implications of all research activities carried out by members of the School. A formal ethics policy and set of procedures have been devised, which can be found at <http://www.sps.ed.ac.uk/research/ethics>

The research you carry out as part of your project is subject to these procedures.

All students are required to complete a self-audit in collaboration with their project supervisor. In order for this audit to be effective, you **must** complete and submit your research proposal to your supervisor by **Monday 29th March 2021**. In the research proposal you **must** demonstrate that you have considered any ethical implications of your proposed research.

The school uses an online tool for submitting ethical audits. **To complete your ethical audit go here:** https://ethics.sps.ed.ac.uk/ethics_form

On this form you should select your supervisor and leave the course organizer box blank. After the initial audit, your supervisor will advise if you require to make any revisions to your research plans in the light of any ethical concerns. In some cases, you will be asked to elaborate further on your answers. This should be completed and reviewed with your supervisor and the Honours Convener.

Do not begin your data collection until your supervisor or the honours convener has approved your Ethical Audit.

In some cases, and especially since the uncertainties associated with Covid19, students may need or decide to change their plans with regard to their research methods, the people they intend to research, or indeed may change their project topic completely. You are perfectly at liberty to do this, but certain conditions apply. **If you change your plans after you have submitted the research proposal and completed the initial ethical audit it is imperative that you inform your supervisor of your change of plans, as this may raise new ethical concerns and a new ethical evaluation may be necessary.** If for any reason you are unable to contact your supervisor, you should seek advice from another member of staff such as the Project Convener, the Head of Sociology, or your Personal Tutor. We cannot support research which has not been sanctioned by your supervisor or another member of staff, and work carried out under such conditions will be subject to the penalties outlined above. **If you wish to change your plans, being unable to contact any appropriate member of staff is not an acceptable excuse for proceeding with the research unsupported. You must wait until you have received ethical clearance.**

Although we do not ask you to submit a research proposal and carry out an ethical audit until towards the end of the second semester, it is important that you think about potential ethical problems **at the earliest possible stage**. This will allow time to resolve or minimize any such problems, or to gain any permission that may be required from a third party.

Certain kinds of research routinely require a more detailed level of ethical scrutiny. If your intended research falls into any of the following categories, allow plenty of time for ethical clearance or the granting of permission from a third party, and you discuss with your supervisor whether it may be necessary to begin action to secure ethical approval **well before** the deadline.

- Work with children, young people or vulnerable adults (see Disclosure Scotland below).
- Medically-related research.
- The discussion or investigation of illegal activities.
- The distribution of questionnaires to undergraduates. This requires the approval of the Head of Sociology or of the other departments/subject areas involved. If you intend to survey a wider range of students across the university, then this may

require the permission of the Secretary of the University.

8) Disclosure Scotland

Students and staff whose research may involve regular contact with children and vulnerable adults may be legally required to join the Protecting Vulnerable Groups Scheme organized by Disclosure Scotland. Talk to your supervisor, the honours convener and any organization you are planning to work with about this in the first instance. Information is also available on the Disclosure Scotland website: <http://www.disclosurescotland.co.uk/>

Any application for Disclosure Scotland must be countersigned by a member of staff at the CHSS College Office.

9) Safety and Care when Undertaking Research

Make sure you organize the fieldwork for your project to minimise personal risk. Use the departmental not your home address, and exercise caution and common-sense in arranging meetings with interviewees, etc. If you have any worries, consult your supervisor, the Head of Sociology, or the Honours Convenor.

Approaching Organizations and Participants and Choosing Sensitive Topics:

You **must** use your university email address when contacting organizations or individuals in relation to your research. Remember that you will be seen as a representative of the university and so you must exercise care and sensitivity in this situation.

Do make sure that you build in enough time to have an appropriate interaction with participants/institutions – i.e. don't contact them at the last minute and then withdraw interest or ignore responses because it doesn't fit your schedule.

Please exercise particular sensitivity when dealing with potentially vulnerable participants or organizations who are concerned with vulnerable individuals.

If in doubt, double-check with your supervisor that you have formulated your message in an appropriate way.

Finally, you should also bear in mind the risks to your own well-being of choosing topics for your project that you have a personal experience of but may be sensitive in nature. Again, if in doubt please talk this through with your supervisor.

10) Doing a Social Theory Project

- a) Theory projects can legitimately have a diverse form; as with other projects, the student (and supervisor) should work to create this from an open-ended starting point. Some possibilities include:
 - The in-depth analysis of a key thinker (or key thinkers) in relation to a particular issue, e.g. a critical assessment of Foucault's treatment of social structure.
 - The mapping of a term/concept, e.g. a systematic comparison of the different ways in which the term 'identity' is theorised in different approaches
 - An assessment of the state of a theoretical debate, e.g. a comparison and critical assessment of recent writings on reflexivity

- b) As with empirical projects, a theory project should be well-designed. Generally speaking we might expect:
- A clear statement of the problem or problems addressed and rationale for addressing them (e.g. the investigation develops from previous work, it addresses a gap in the literature, it offers a somewhat different treatment of a familiar theorist/concept/debate)
 - A justification of the way the problem is being addressed. This would involve a justified delimitation of the area/works being drawn on. Examples might include:
 - when looking at some aspect of a theorist's work, why particular books were focused on rather than others
 - if the project is focusing on a contrast between two theoretical approaches to an issue, e.g. identity, why those two approaches were chosen rather than others).
 - Delimitations do have to be reasonable. If focusing on the work of one thinker, it would not be considered reasonable to consult and refer to only a small portion of their work.
 - A systematic addressing of the problem(s) in the body of the project and engagement with the relevant literature.
 - A conclusion in which there are proposed answer(s) that draw on the main body of the thesis work

A potential legitimate exception to these criteria of design would be projects that were based on an explicit commitment to post-structuralist and related approaches which reject these kinds of framings. Such projects would be shaped and assessed by reference to the (often partially implicit) criteria of such approaches.

- c) Students should engage with the relevant primary sources AND secondary sources. In topics which require substantial engagement with prominent theorists, we would expect the student to read and understand the theorists' own works, and be able to write about them in a way which didn't simply rely on and reproduce secondary sources. Likewise, in topics based around a survey of key contributions to a debate, e.g. the nature of reflexivity, there would be an expectation that students had read key works rather than only secondary literature about them.
- d) A related point to (c) is that we would expect a sense of depth from the account of thinkers/theories/concepts that would be greater than that of a long essay. The writing should also not look like a 'first draft' but give a sense of being 'worked-over'. The project should build a good argument, marshal the evidence and draw the appropriate conclusions from it.
- e) The project should not simply describe and summarise the work of others. We hope that students will be able to develop elements of their own voice, position and critical perspective. Obviously expectations about the extent to which this can be achieved will be shaped by the fact that this is an undergraduate project, rather than postgraduate work.

10) Project Report and Diary

The Project Report and Diary are assessed together and each is important. It is easiest to think of the report as several small (though, of course, linked) writing tasks. The typical structure of the Report and Diary is as follows:

Title Page:

Remember that the TITLE is the first piece of information a reader gets about your project. Try to think of a title which accurately represents and informs about the substance of your

project, but avoid titles which are overly long and descriptive. The title page should also include the **word count**, your **examination number** (NOT YOUR NAME) and **your supervisor's name** (so that they are not inadvertently allocated your project to mark). If you had more than one supervisor, name both.

Abstract:

On the first page of your Project Report (after the title page) you **must** provide an abstract of the main report (not the diary). The abstract should be a **brief** summary which explains what the project was about; the research design and methods (who or what was investigated? where? how?); and your principal findings and conclusions. **The abstract must be between 150 and 250 words.** Like the Diary, it is an integral part of your Project and will be assessed as such, but it will not be included in the overall word limit. If you need further guidance, the abstracts which accompany articles in most academic journals will also give you an idea of what we are looking for.

Table of Contents:

List all sections and sub-sections of your report (including Bibliography, Diary and Appendices), giving page numbers.

The Report:

Acknowledgements

Introduction: Outline of the scope of the topic and the structure of the report

Literature: initial section (approx. 2,000 words including the Introduction) setting out your research problem, especially in terms of background sociological literature:

Literature brought to bear in a relevant way to the project topic

Use of concepts and theories

Location of project in wider debates

Synthesis of different concepts, ideas, subjects

Critical appraisal of existing literature

Research question(s)

Methods: statement of research methodology and procedures, and an account of the ethical considerations raised by the research (approx. 1,500 words).

Account of the methods chosen and data collected

Justification of the methods chosen

Evidence of reflexivity

Consideration of ethical aspects of the research

Findings: report and analysis of your substantive research findings (approx. 5,000 words).

Conclusions: (approx. 1,500 words). In the conclusion you need to do more than simply offer a few brief comments and/or summarise your findings. You should use your conclusions to link your findings to the initial section. You may also want to reflect on the research experience as a whole and offer suggestions for future research. Some questions to think about:

Do you make the most of the findings?

Are the conclusions drawn warranted by the evidence?

Do the conclusions relate back to the introduction and literature review?

Do you use the conclusions to reflect on the research experience and offer suggestions for future research?

Bibliography:

List alphabetically and consistently **ALL** the sources that you cite in the text of your report. See the section on **Referencing** in the Year 3 or Year 4 handbook and check the journal *Sociology* if you are still uncertain.

Appendices:

if you wish, you may include other material in Appendices, such as a sample questionnaire or interview schedule. Do not, however, include interview or focus group transcripts.

The Diary:

Full record of research process from start to finish (see above for details of what this should contain).

Length:

The report must not be more than 10,000 words long. This is a STRICT LIMIT around which there is NO latitude and you will be penalised if you go beyond it. Projects above 10,000 words will be penalised using the School's penalty rules which is currently a 5-mark penalty, deducted regardless of how many words over the limit the work is. A word count (which your word processing software can produce) must be given on the title page. **The word count INCLUDES the main text of the report, footnotes/endnotes and any quotations from interviews, focus groups etc.** The following are EXCLUDED from the word count: title page, abstract, table of contents, acknowledgments, bibliography, any figures and tables, Diary and Appendices.

Plagiarism:

Your report and diary must be your own work, and there are severe penalties for plagiarism.

Presentation is also important:

Your writing style should meet normal academic standards concerning grammar, citations, footnoting, referencing and bibliography, data presentation, and the organisation of arguments and evidence. Pay careful attention to the overall presentation (e.g. proof-reading, use of subheadings, consistent quotation style).

All the elements of The Report should be **word-processed** as it will be submitted electronically.

11) Submission of Project Report:

Your Report and the Diary must be submitted electronically via the electronic submission system ELMA, and the course code is SCIL10045.

As part of the electronic submission process, you will need to declare that each piece of assessment you submit is your own work

Final date for submitting your Project Report:

Midnight on Wednesday 8th December 2021

Lateness penalties will be applied if you submit after this!

Reminder: the Report and Diary etc. should be anonymous. Please make sure you do not include your own name or photograph on ANY material that you submit (e.g. on

your questionnaire if you include one or any emails copied into your diary). Put your exam number and the name of your supervisor(s) on the title page.

12) Freedom of Information

The School's policy is to retain copies of dissertations. The Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002 requires the University to make available to any enquirer information held by the University, unless one of the legislation's narrowly defined exemptions applies. Exemptions include:

- Information provided in confidence (e.g. situations where individuals were interviewed in confidence and are quoted in the dissertation).
- Substantial prejudice to commercial interests
- Research in progress (most likely to apply where dissertations include information about research findings that have not yet been published but where an intention exists to publish them).

Should you believe that an exemption applies to your dissertation, or if you believe it should not be made available for future sociology honours students to read, you should contact the honours convener in advance of submitting your dissertation. In the event that anyone asks to see your dissertation, we will determine whether or not it qualifies for a freedom of information exemption and can be withheld.

Finally, feel free to discuss any problems relating to your project with the Honours Convenor, your Personal Tutor, or the Head of Sociology. Deal with problems while time remains to solve them.