



STUDENTS
ORGANISING FOR
SUSTAINABILITY
UNITED KINGDOM

Feedback for the QAA SBS Advisory Group for Sociology

Overview

Students Organising for Sustainability ([SOS-UK](#)) has been working with the Environmental Association for Universities and Colleges ([EAUC](#)) to support QAA Subject Benchmark Statement (SBS) advisory groups with increasing student voice in their process and integrating sustainability and climate justice into their subject. This is critical and necessary work that will help ensure SBSs are representative and inclusive, whilst providing students with the necessary skills and knowledge to go into green careers and support our collective sustainable future. On 27th November 2024, SOS-UK held an online student consultation to gather views relating to the Subject Benchmark Statement for Sociology. Current students and recent undergraduates from a diverse variety of UK universities reviewed the current SBS through a sustainability and climate justice lens, finding positive examples and developing suggestions for how the SBS can become more accessible, inclusive, sustainable and forward-facing.

Positive elements of the existing document

- Although noting that the current SBS is 'very vague', although necessarily so, students praised the 'solid foundations' of the document, especially parts dealing with nature and extent of Sociology.
- Students enjoyed references to self-reflection and the adaptive nature of Sociological study, and emphasised that the discipline must continue to interrogate its theory and methods and challenge assumption, along with making sure that no single theoretical framework should dominate the discipline.

Suggestions for improvements or amendments

- Students discussed how elements of sociological skill base may be applicable to the broader social sciences, and to STEM and non-humanity qualifications around applicability and reflexivity, especially around accessibility and sustainability. They would like to see this better reflected in the SBS.
- Students discussed terminology and wish the advisory group to especially consider the nuances and meanings of the words 'sex' and 'gender', and update statements made around discrimination and classification.
- Students discussed the topic of decolonisation, especially the legacy of colonial social structures, and how critical it is to the study of Sociology. They would like to see this considered within the new SBS.
- Students highlighted that the current document uses complex academic language and is not accessible for those with dyslexia, or younger students considering the subject for study at higher education. They suggested that an executive summary or shorter, bullet-point style document is produced that is aimed towards students in further or secondary education.
- Students referenced the significant current lack of content relating to sustainability and urged the group to use a forward-looking approach, that safeguards the future of this subject and of our planet. The group discussed the intersectionality of sustainability, and urged the group to also deeply consider justice issues, and how this can be interwoven into every section of the document.
- Students stated that the new iteration of this document must address the issue of emerging technologies, especially AI, although there was differing opinion within the group over the role that it should play. Some students particularly reflected on the environmental impact of AI data centres, and the potential negative impact on student knowledge and skills, and others were excited about the possibilities that AI may open up for Sociology as a discipline.

The future of Sociology

- Students were highly positive in regards to the future of Sociology. They were excited about increasing meaningful representation of student voices within the QAA advisory groups and review process, and wished the panel to know that they were eager for the new Subject Benchmark Statement to be widely circulated to students following publication in 2026.

For more information about this student consultation, including more detailed feedback, please contact Hannah Fitzpatrick, Senior Project Manager for Education at SOS-UK: hannah.fitzpatrick@sos-uk.org.

