
SOCIAL STUDIES PROGRAMME

Programme Guide

Master's-level • 60 ECTS • Online

1. PROGRAMME OVERVIEW

The Institute for Social Sciences & Humanities (ISSH), also known as Iran Academia, provides higher-level education in the social sciences and humanities. The Social Studies programme is an interdisciplinary, Master's-level programme designed for students who want to analyse social, political and economic change through rigorous theory, research methods and independent inquiry.

The programme combines foundational study in social theory, political thought, political economy and research methodology with thematic study in social change, democracy and development. Students complete the programme with supervised independent research.

PROGRAMME AT A GLANCE

Programme	Social Studies
Level	Master's level; NLQF/EQF Level 7
Study load	60 ECTS
Mode of delivery	Online
Normal duration	1 year full-time; a part-time route may extend study to 2 years
Structure	30 ECTS compulsory courses + 15 ECTS track/electives + 15 ECTS thesis component
Study tracks	Social Change; Democracy & Development
Language	Persian (with academic literature in Persian and other languages as applicable)

2. QUALIFICATION LEVEL AND ACCREDITATION

The Social Studies programme is classified at Level 7 of the Dutch Qualifications Framework (NLQF), which corresponds to Level 7 of the European Qualifications Framework (EQF). At European level, the learning-outcome descriptor for the second cycle of the Qualifications Framework for the European Higher Education Area (QF-EHEA) corresponds to EQF Level 7. The programme is therefore described by ISSH as a Master's-level programme.

Official NLQF record: [Social Studies qualification in the NLQF register](#)

The programme is also accredited by the International Accreditation Council for Global Development Studies and Research (IAC/EADI), the independent accreditation council of the European Association of Development Research and Training Institutes (EADI).

IAC/EADI register: [Register of accredited programmes](#)

The two forms of external recognition serve different purposes: NLQF classification establishes the level of the programme's learning outcomes within the Dutch and European qualifications frameworks, while IAC/EADI accreditation evaluates the programme against international quality standards in development studies and related fields.

3. PROGRAMME AIMS AND LEARNING OUTCOMES

The programme aims to enable students to:

- develop advanced knowledge of major concepts, theories and debates in the social sciences;

- analyse complex social, political and economic developments using interdisciplinary perspectives;
- apply qualitative and other appropriate social-science research methods to clearly formulated research questions;
- critically evaluate academic arguments, evidence and sources, and construct well-supported arguments of their own;
- connect theoretical debates to empirical questions concerning social change, democracy and development;
- work independently at an advanced academic level, while recognising methodological, ethical and evidential limitations;
- communicate complex ideas and research findings clearly to academic and informed non-specialist audiences; and
- design and complete a supervised research project that integrates theory, method, analysis and academic writing.

4. CURRICULUM STRUCTURE

The programme comprises 60 ECTS. The first part establishes a common methodological and theoretical foundation. In the second part, students pursue a thematic track and complete supervised research.

Component	Courses / requirement	ECTS	Cumulative
Methodology	Research methodology	7.5	7.5
Fundamentals	Political Thought / Critical Thinking; Sociological Theory; Political Economy	22.5	30
Track / electives	Two courses within the selected track	15	45
Thesis component	15 ECTS thesis, or 7.5 ECTS short thesis + 7.5 ECTS additional elective	15	60

METHODOLOGY

The methodology component develops the capacity to formulate researchable questions, select and justify appropriate methods, work critically with evidence, and understand the relationship between research design, analysis and academic argument.

FUNDAMENTALS

The fundamental courses provide the shared theoretical basis of the programme. They introduce advanced debates in political thought, sociological theory and political economy and prepare students to work across disciplinary boundaries.

TRACKS AND ELECTIVES

Students normally select one of two thematic tracks. A track consists of two designated courses (15 ECTS). The track structure supports thematic coherence while preserving the interdisciplinary character of the programme.

- Social Change
- Democracy & Development

5. INDICATIVE COURSE STRUCTURE

The course titles below reflect the programme structure represented in this guide. Instructors and individual course offerings may change from one academic year to another. The annual course catalogue and timetable are authoritative for a specific cohort.

SEMESTER 1 — COMPULSORY COURSES (30 ECTS)

Course	Area	ECTS
Methodology	Research methodology	7.5
Political Thought (Critical Thinking)	Fundamentals	7.5
Sociological Theory	Fundamentals	7.5
Political Economy	Fundamentals	7.5

SEMESTER 2 — TRACK COURSES (15 ECTS)

Track	Indicative courses	ECTS
Social Change	Social Movements: Comparative and Historical Analysis;	7.5
	Gender and Social Change	7.5
Democracy & Development	Political Economy of Growth and Development;	7.5
	Democracy and Good Governance	7.5

THESIS COMPONENT (15 ECTS)

All students complete supervised research. The standard route is a 15 ECTS thesis. Where the short-thesis route is offered, students complete a 7.5 ECTS short thesis together with an additional 7.5 ECTS elective, so that the thesis component and total programme load remain 15 ECTS and 60 ECTS respectively.

6. STUDY ORGANISATION AND ASSESSMENT

The programme is organised in two semesters. Exact teaching weeks, submission deadlines and breaks are published for each cohort. Students are expected to participate actively in online teaching and academic discussion, complete assigned reading, submit assessed work on time and maintain regular contact with instructors and supervisors.

Assessment may include analytical essays, research papers, presentations, methodological assignments and the thesis. Assessment tasks are designed to test advanced knowledge, critical analysis, research competence and independent academic work. Detailed assessment criteria are provided in course syllabi and programme regulations.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

All submitted work must comply with ISSH rules on academic integrity, citation and the responsible use of digital and AI-assisted tools. Students remain responsible for the accuracy, originality and proper attribution of all work submitted for assessment.

7. PROGRESSION AND COMPLETION

To complete the programme, students must earn 60 ECTS and satisfy all compulsory, track/elective and research requirements. A track designation may be recorded only where the student has completed the required track courses and, where applicable under programme regulations, has pursued a thesis topic consistent with that track.

The programme's level and learning outcomes are intended to prepare graduates for advanced academic, research, professional and civic work requiring critical analysis of complex social questions. Completion of the programme does not by itself determine admission to a doctoral programme or recognition for a regulated profession; such decisions are made by the receiving institution or competent authority.

8. QUALITY ASSURANCE AND PROGRAMME REVIEW

The programme is reviewed through internal academic governance and external quality-assurance processes. Curriculum design, learning outcomes, assessment and student progression are periodically reviewed in light of programme evaluation, student and faculty feedback, and the requirements associated with NLQF classification and IAC/EADI accreditation.

9. TERMINOLOGY AND PRESENTATION

For public and formal documents, ISSH should use consistent terminology. Recommended forms are:

- “Master’s-level Social Studies programme” rather than “Master’s programme” where the distinction is legally relevant;
- “classified at NLQF Level 7 / EQF Level 7” or “referenced at Level 7” when describing the qualifications-framework level;
- “accredited by IAC/EADI” when describing programme accreditation; and
- “60 ECTS” for the total study load.

10. OFFICIAL REFERENCES

Dutch Qualifications Framework (NLQF): [NLQF register](#)

Programme register entry: [Social Studies — official NLQF record](#)

IAC/EADI: [Accredited programmes](#)

European Qualifications Framework: [EQF Level 7 descriptors and QF-EHEA compatibility](#)