

**Sociology
GCSE****Introduction**

Have you ever attended a wedding and watched the faces of the near relatives, and wondered what sort of a marriage the couple would have — what influence the in-laws would have, how the housework would be distributed, where the household would be set up, etc?

Have you ever noticed the number of things you do without thinking — like wearing the right clothes, eating with the right implements, or talking in a particular way, and wondered why you feel it essential to behave in this way?

Have you ever thought about society as such and wondered why some should be poor and others rich, why some should be considered more important than others?

Have you ever joined in a demonstration against the authorities and felt the need to participate actively in the governing process?

If you have answered 'yes' to one or more of these questions, you are going to enjoy learning about the various institutions that make up society, how they function and how they influence your life. You will find it interesting to see how different 'classical' thinkers have held different views about society and how there are different ways in which society can be studied.

This Introduction includes all the information that you need before you really start studying in earnest. It includes details of the syllabuses that you may be tackling and advice on how to work with this course.



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Study Technique

There is no single study technique that is right for this course. Indeed, there are as many different ways of studying as there are learners. So you will have to find the methods which are right for you in your own personal situation. However, the following tips represent some of the best advice for the majority of 'open' learners.

Discipline is undoubtedly the key. You must set aside a specific period each day or definite times each week and stick to it! Don't let yourself make excuses for not getting down to work. Set yourself definite targets — not just the date of your examination, but the date when you are going to submit your first assignment, and so on. Break your study up into small 'bite-sized' pieces.

Don't just skip over the bits that don't make sense to you. In a subject like Sociology, all the topics are closely linked together and if you don't understand part of one lesson, it is going to affect your ability to study other lessons as well. So go over the difficult section until it begins to make sense. If the lesson materials are not clear to you, look at the way the same ideas are covered in your supplementary reading. If you're still not sure, it should be possible for you to contact your tutor (by phone or post). Don't be shy about doing that!

Don't underestimate the amount of study that is need to gain the top grades. Simply memorising all the ideas in the lessons may not be enough. You should be studying even when you are not studying! Television, radio, newspapers and magazines give you a picture of how the world around you is changing and provide you with valuable up-to-date examples. So keep a look-out for programmes or articles which might be useful to your studies. Study the behaviour of those around you. What are the rules of conduct within your own family? Or within your place of work or education? Why and how do these patterns change? If you already have an enquiring and critical mind, you are well placed.

Study the syllabus. This will tell you not just what you need to study but what the underlying objectives are, *why* you are studying these things. A brief analysis of the syllabus is given below but we strongly advise you to get hold of the complete syllabus and work out which parts of the course will help you with which sections of the syllabus, and so on. Get hold of practice examination papers as well, if you can. These will

show you what sort of questions you are likely to face and what sort of skills you will need to demonstrate.

Make full use of your tutor. He or she is paid to help you, after all! Take advantage of any opportunities for tutorials and other practical help. Make sure you submit all your Tutor-marked Assignments for marking. Your tutor will spend quite a bit of time on the marking so you should take full note of whatever comments you get. The comments are usually more important than the marks because they are designed to show you ways that you can improve.

Make notes. There are any number of ways of doing this and you will have to find the one that is best for you. Making notes is a way of getting things clear in your own mind. It helps you to remember the ideas and when you come to revision you should find that you have written down an effective summary of the key ideas. Never assume that you are going to remember something just because you have read it. Most people's memories are not as good as that!

Do all the tests. Just because you think you understand something, you should not skip over the tests. They are there to reinforce the ideas and plant them firmly in you memory. A fuller description of the assessment structure of the course is given below.

Course Reading Material and other Resources

All of the vital material you need for this course is contained within the twenty lessons. However, you will find that your knowledge of the study of society is considerably broadened by carrying out some additional reading.

One text may cover your supplementary reading. It is:

M. Haralambos & F.K.E. Smith: *Sociology: a New Approach* (Causeway Press, 3rd ed.) (ISBN: 18739 29 552)

We strongly recommend that you buy or borrow this publication since it will amplify all the topics that we cover. It is structured around stimulus material and a series of questions based on this. Working through some of the questions will help you prepare for your examination. There is also an answer book available.

You will also find these books to be valuable sources of information:

Pauline Wilson & Alan Kidd: *Sociology for GCSE* (Collins)

Jonathan Blundell: *Active Sociology for GCSE* (Longman)

Ken Browne: *An Introduction to Sociology* (Polity)

One easy way to buy supporting texts is through the OOL website (www.ool.co.uk). But, as indicated above, it is vital that you should also pay close attention to the world that you live in and cast a critical eye on what you see. Newspapers, magazines, television and radio all offer valuable up-to-date materials. Of course, some programmes and publications are better than others, so look out for the ones which focus on society today. Some newspapers carry special sections which discuss sociological questions in clear, everyday terms. The *Guardian* has a 'Society' supplement once a week, while the *Sunday Times* sometimes includes a supplement called 'New Society'. Both of these are well worth studying.

These are your 'secondary' resources and you will find that they will serve a number of purposes. You will see that some if not most of the questions in your examination will require you to respond to 'stimulus' materials of various kinds. This means you must learn not to accept everything at face value.

Whenever you listen to a programme or read an article, you should try to work out the point of view of the writer or speaker behind it. What is that person's perspective? Is it fair and unbiased? Is there another way of looking at the same data or information? The more critical you become the better you will do. Try to relate what you hear and read to the concepts and topics that you are studying so that you find concrete examples for abstract ideas.

The Arrangement of Lessons

1. What is Sociology? (1)
2. What is Sociology? (2)
3. The Family (1)
4. The Family (2)

Tutor-marked Assignment A

5. Education (1)
6. Education (2)
7. Stratification (1)
8. Stratification (2)

Tutor-marked Assignment B

9. The Welfare State
10. Poverty (1)
11. Poverty (2)

Tutor-marked Assignment C

12. Politics (1)
13. Politics (2)
14. Work
15. Unemployment

Tutor-marked Assignment D

16. Population (1)
17. Population (2)
18. Urbanisation

Tutor-marked Assignment E

19. Social Control

20. Deviance

Tutor-marked Assignment F

Supplement: Project Work

You will see from this that most of the key topics are divided between two lessons. Often the first provides a general introduction while the second looks at the situation in Britain today.

Self-Assessment Tests and Activities

The self-assessment tests are a crucial element in the course. You will find a number of these in every lesson. Usually, they consist of quite straightforward questions which test your memory and understanding of the material that you have just worked through. Often they will consist of one-word answers. But do not just skip over them. Check in the answers at the end of the lesson that you have got them right and, if you have not, it is a sure sign that you should go back over the preceding section until the point is clear.

The self-assessment tests are also designed as a useful revision aid. They are clearly ruled off from the main body of the lesson so when you come to a tutor-marked assignment or to your examination, you can go back over the self-assessment tests at a rapid pace. This will tell you what has stayed in your memory and what has drifted away. Keep going over these tests until you can get them all right because between them they contain just about all the essential ideas that you will need for your examination.

Some of the lessons also include 'Activities' sections. These are like the self-assessment tests except that they do not ask specific questions and there are no answers provided. They are designed to open out your thinking and to get you to observe what is going on around you. Sometimes they will suggest something practical that you can do, a little bit of research that would be useful. It is important that you do not neglect these hints and suggestions.

Finally, from time to time, you will find exercises to complete. These generally require you to look carefully at parts of the text. This will help to develop your analytical skills as well as

drawing your attention to important information. Spend time on doing these exercises as carefully as possible as the skills you develop are directly relevant to your examination. Suggested answers are provided at the end of each lesson.

The Choice of Syllabus

All the GCSE Sociology syllabuses are similar because they are devised according to a set of “national criteria” laid down for all the boards to follow. So this course will be satisfactory whatever GCSE syllabus you attempt.

But the course focuses on the requirements of one syllabus in particular — syllabus 3192 set by the Assessment and Qualifications Alliance (AQA). This syllabus (or ‘specification’) represents a merging of the two old SEG and NEAB specifications. These two boards merged to become AQA.

The AQA Examination

In the examination, AQA requires candidates to tackle **one** written examination paper and submit a project. But there is a choice of written paper according to whether you are going for a low grade or a relatively high grade. The easier paper is called the “Foundation” level paper (3192/F) and the harder one is called the “Higher” paper (3192/H). Since the harder paper allows you to get any grade between A* and D, this course is designed for those aiming to gain the top grades and only details of the Higher option are given below.

Written Paper 1 (2½ hours, 80% of total marks)

The paper will be divided into two sections. The compulsory structured question in Section A will be based mainly on the “What is Sociology?” section of the syllabus. The rest of the paper consists of eight other structured questions which cover the rest of the syllabus (see below). Candidates will be required to answer four out of these eight questions.

Coursework (20% of the total marks)

You are required to submit a project undertaken in the 12 months preceding your exam. It should be between 1,500 and 2,500 words long. If you qualify as an external candidate, this will be marked by the exam board.

AQA Subject Content

The subject content is divided up as follows:

1. What is sociology?
 - (a) sociological terms and concepts
 - (b) some aspects of sociological method
2. The Sociology of the Family
 - (a) development and characteristics of family forms in modern Britain
 - (b) changing relationships within the family
 - (c) sociological approaches to the family
 - (d) divorce and the decline of the family
3. The Sociology of Education
 - (a) changes in the structure and functions of education
 - (b) formal and informal education
 - (c) ability and differential achievement
 - (d) the role of education in society
4. Social Differentiation
 - (a) forms of social stratification
 - (b) social change and stratification
 - (c) structure of inequality
 - (d) social mobility
5. Poverty and the Welfare State
 - (a) provisions and problems of the Welfare State
 - (b) poverty
 - (c) politics and the Welfare State
6. The Sociology of Power and Politics
 - (a) decision making and citizenship in Britain
 - (b) political socialisation
 - (c) voting behaviour
 - (d) political change
7. The Sociology of Work
 - (a) the meaning of work and the relationship between work and non-work
 - (b) Technological and Organisational change
 - (c) Patterns of employment

8. Migration and Movement
 - (a) population distribution and structure
 - (b) movement and settlement
 - (c) population and change

9. Social Control and Deviance
 - (a) deviance and crime
 - (b) sociological approaches to criminal and deviant behaviour
 - (c) crime and society

Further details of all these topics can be found in the syllabus.

Don't worry if these terms mean very little to you at this stage but you will eventually be able to tick off the topics you have covered. You will see that this course is broken up into similar divisions and follows a similar sequence. As you go through the course you might like to tick off the elements of the syllabus that you have covered.

Coursework

To do well in coursework you will need almost exactly the same skills as you will require for success in the examination and the same qualities that you will require to get you through this course of study. All three require an ability to work and think independently, to hunt out information and make notes, to make good use of resources (e.g. libraries and Internet) and to organise and express your ideas effectively.

It is expected that your tutor will give you a certain amount of help with your coursework although they cannot give too much guidance. It must be all your own work but your tutor should help you select an appropriate topic or topics, according to your interests and aptitudes, and suggest possible avenues of investigation that might prove fruitful. You may be advised on the methods you adopt to collect data and *some* help may be given with preparatory drafts. But after that you are on your own.

So you will need to plan your time carefully. Find out the closing date for coursework and work out your own private calendar to meet that deadline. It is perhaps advisable that you should have completed most of your basic studies before embarking on your coursework in order to create a good impression. But right from the beginning you can be looking out for topics which are of special interest to you and keeping

a file of any useful items (e.g. newspaper articles) which might contribute to your investigations.

At various points throughout the course, you will be asked to start thinking about the coursework requirements and a few tentative topics will be suggested that might tie in with what you have learnt so far and the assignments that you have already done.

A little later you will be expected (with your tutor's help) to decide on a specific topic or topics and you will be given some assistance with the planning of your investigations. Finally, there will be some guidance on how to present your findings and ideas objectively and persuasively.

With luck, coursework can be the most enjoyable and rewarding part of your studies!

Grade Descriptions

There are eight possible grades at GCSE: A* ("A starred"), A, B, C, D, E, F and G. The bottom two grades indicate a very poor performance and you should expect to aim much higher than that.

It is generally agreed that a grade B at GCSE is equivalent to a good pass in the old 'O' level examination and a grade C is the absolute minimum if you want to go on to 'A' level. This course is designed for students aiming for grades A*-D, i.e. those who take the harder exam papers. If you sit the Higher paper and fail to achieve a grade D, examiners are allowed to award a grade E if they see fit.

Making Notes

Every student will want to take his or her own notes as the course proceeds, to help with the learning process and to assist with examination revision. What sort of notes should they be? How lengthy? There are no fixed answers to these questions. Some students seek reassurance in writing out elaborate reams of notes which they boil down later; others are happy to keep note-taking to a minimum by merely recording key references. Without being too dogmatic, a number of points relating to the needs of the G.C.S.E course might be made:

- it is important to cross-reference facts, sources and conclusions as they are encountered in the course, so that knowledge and skills are not separated in revision
- notes should be kept as brief as possible (i.e. without omitting crucial facts or concepts)
- details of individual sources should not be copied out, unless they contain crucial information. While a knowledge of the major types of source for each theme and topic is obviously useful, candidates are not expected to know particular sources in advance.

The examination papers reproduce sources in full, questions being aimed at their context and interpretation rather than at the candidate's ability to recognise them individually.

It is strongly recommended that students make notes under each of the headings given throughout the text every lesson. These may then be compared with the summary that closes each lesson. Do you feel that the summary is full enough? If not, make sure that your own notes fill in any gaps that you feel exist.

Tutor-Marked Assignments

The course includes six tutor-marked assignments. These should be attempted at specific points in the course, after lessons 4, 8, 11, 15, 18 and 20. These tests consist of questions which have mostly been taken from specimen examination papers devised by the old SEG (now AQA) and other boards and are used by kind permission.

You should treat these assignments like miniature examination papers and submit your finished papers to your tutor for marking. When the marked assignments are returned to you, you should also receive a copy of the suggested answers. These will give you an indication of the sort of answers that might have gained you top marks.

Do not worry if your own answers are not the same as those provided. Sociology is not an exact science so there is plenty of room for your own ideas as long as they are well backed up with evidence. You should be able to provide examples which are more up-to-date than those provided with the course!

Studying the Syllabus

You should be sure to acquire your own copy of the syllabus, either via the AQA Publications Dept or from the website www.aqa.org.uk.

The syllabus can be purchased from

Publications,
AQA, Aldon House,
39, Heald Grove,
Rusholme,
Manchester
M14 4NA (tel: 0161-953-1170)

or downloaded from www.aqa.org.uk/qual/pdf/AQA3192WSP.pdf.

We advise that you obtain a copy of the syllabus so that you can assess which topics you have covered in the most detail and which ones you will feel happiest about in the exam. AQA can also provide advice booklets on your course, including 'Supplementary Guidance for Private Candidates'. As you approach the examination, it will also be helpful to purchase and tackle past papers from AQA.

Using the Internet

All students would benefit from access to the Internet. You will find a wealth of information on all the topics in your course. As well as the AQA website (www.aqa.org.uk), you should get into the habit of checking the Oxford Open Learning site (www.ool.co.uk) where you may find news, additional resources and interactive features as time goes by. If you have not already done so, you may register for your free copy of *How to Study at Home*, our 200-page guide to home learning, or enrol on further courses. Put it on your Favourites list now!

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