

**Sociology
'A' level****Introduction**

Welcome to your 'A' level Sociology course. This Introduction should provide you with all the information you need to make a successful start to your studies.

The Specification (or Syllabus)

This course has been designed to give you a full and thorough preparation for the AS level 7191 or A level Sociology 7192 specifications, set by the Assessment and Qualifications Alliance (AQA).

No coursework is required.

Private Candidates

The AQA specification is open to private candidates. Private candidates should contact AQA for a copy of *Information for Private Candidates*.



Oxford Open Learning

The Arrangement of Lessons

Within the examination, both for AS and the full A level, there are a number of topics, from which candidates can choose, depending on personal preference. Many exam centres do not teach the entire syllabus, preferring to focus on just one topic per module. However, it is beneficial for candidates to have studied a range of topics within Sociology, in order to gain a broader understanding. Additionally, many topics overlap, or complement each other in some way (for example, knowledge of the UK welfare system will link to the study of the family).

With this in mind, you will find that we have included notes on every topic within the specification, ordered by module. Each lesson contains self-tuition questions and activities. However, some topics will be considerably more substantial than others, and will contain at least two tutor-marked assignments (TMAs). These are the topics that we recommend you choose in the exam itself (although you are perfectly free to choose an alternative topic if you wish). These topics are listed in bold, below.

1st Year/ AS Level

Introduction to Sociology

- | | | |
|----|--|---------------------------------------|
| 1. | What is Sociology? | Bown reading refs.
ch. 1, pp. 2-15 |
| 2. | Introduction to Research Methods
Tutor-marked Assignment A | ch. 1, pp. 16-49 |

Module One: Culture, Families and Wealth

- | | | |
|----|--|--------------------|
| 3. | Culture and Identity | ch. 4 |
| 4. | Families and Households (1)
Tutor-marked Assignment B | ch. 5 |
| 5. | Families and Households (2)
Tutor-marked Assignment C | (ch. 5) |
| 6. | Wealth and Poverty | ch. 7, pp. 283-316 |
| 7. | Welfare | ch. 7, pp. 317-334 |

Module Two: Education, Health and Sociological Methods

- | | |
|--|------------------|
| 8. Education (1)
Tutor-marked Assignment D | ch. 2, pp. 50-56 |
| 9. Education (2)
Tutor-marked Assignment E | ch. 2, pp. 57-89 |
| 10. Health | ch. 6 |
| 11. Sociological Methods
Tutor-marked Assignment F
Tutor-marked Assignment G – Mock Exam Paper(s) | ch. 3; ch. 8 |

A Level - 2nd Year Course

Module Three: Beliefs in Society

- Ideology, Science and Religion
- Social Change and Religion
- Religious Organisations
Tutor-marked Assignment H
- Different Social Groups and Religious Belief
- Methods of Studying Religion
Tutor-marked Assignment I

Module Four: Other Optional Topics

- Global Development
- The Media (1)
- The Media (2)
Tutor-marked Assignment J
- Stratification and Differentiation

Module Five: Crime and Deviance

- Crime, Deviance and Social Order
- The Social Distribution of Crime

23. Crime in Contemporary Society
Tutor-marked Assignment K

Module Six: Sociological Methods and Theories

24. Sociological Methods
25. Further Sociological Theories
Tutor-marked Assignment L
26. Revision and Exam Practice
Tutor-marked Assignment M
Tutor-marked Assignment N and O (Mock Examinations)

Textbooks

In recent years there has been a vast increase both in textbooks and in the range of published works that are relevant to 'A' level Sociology. Some are comprehensive textbooks, some are detailed studies of particular social activities, institutions and phenomena, while others attempt to summarise the research that has been undertaken in particular areas of investigation.

The AQA recommend a number of texts for general reference purposes, a list of which will be provided at the end of this introduction. One easy way of acquiring accompanying textbooks is through the Oxford Open Learning website (www.ool.co.uk).

At AS level

All AS students will need to obtain the following textbook:

David Bown, Laura Pountney and Tomislav Maric: *AQA Sociology for A Level Book 1 (AQA for A Level Sociology)*
Published by Hodder Educ. 2015 ISBN-13: 978-1471839399

This accessible textbook, aimed at school and college students, is specifically tailored to the requirements of the AQA specification (syllabus).

Although this textbook covers all the necessary topics in sufficient detail, for a different perspective (and rather more detail), you might also obtain:

Michael Haralambos and Martin Holborn, *Sociology: Themes and Perspectives* (Collins Ed., 8th Edition, ISBN: 978-0007498826)

This best-selling textbook contains a wealth of information and is a comprehensive introduction to all key aspects of Sociology. The publishers also offer online support at www.haralambosholborn.com. Make the most of it! “Optional” references to this text are also given in the OOL course. Another text we can recommend is this one:

Ken Browne: *Sociology for AQA, Vol. 1: AS and 1st-Year A Level* (Polity Press, 5th ed, ISBN: 978-0745691305)

Textbooks for the Second Year

All 2nd Year A level students will need to obtain the following textbook:

Stephen Moore, Dave Aiken and Steve Chapman, *Sociology A2 for AQA* (Collins Ed.) ISBN: 978-0007200641

Again, it would not be a bad idea to get Michael Haralambos and Martin Holborn's *Sociology: Themes and Perspectives* as well and references are given to this. But the Moore text should be sufficient for most students.

Supplementary Resources

The following website is an excellent source of information relating to a wide range of Sociology topics:

www.sociology.org.uk

You will also find AQA's suggestions for general reference books, as well as books relating to specific topics, on the AQA website.

Using the Course Materials

Activities and Self-Tuition Quizzes

Lessons contain brief quizzes which test your factual recall of certain points in the lesson. These also provide a quick means of revision when you have completed the course. You will also find a number of activities in the lessons, which are intended to get you actively thinking about a topic before undertaking a more formal test.

Exploring Research

Numerous studies and pieces of research are cited in these pages. You do not need to memorise details of every single study cited. The more important studies are indicated by the author's name being shown in bold print. In most cases, it is possible to find additional

information about the research or theories in question by typing the name into a search engine. Dates are also generally given, partly so that you can distinguish between different studies by the same author, but more so you can link the study to prevailing sociological theories of the time. The more years have passed since that date, the less likely it is that you will take the conclusions at face value. But *all* research, however recent, should be subject to questions about methodology, validity, etc, and subject to the contextualization provided by fresh data and further research.

Practice Tests

At the end of most lessons you will find a practice test. This usually consists of a single essay topic. You should attempt to answer these questions once you have understood and revised the subject matter of the lesson. Assuming you are working with a tutor, your answers to these tests should **not** be forwarded to him or her, but should be compared with the answers provided in a special section at the end of each module.

Tutor-marked Assignments

To complete the assessment process, there are fifteen 'lettered' tests (Tutor-marked Assignments A to O) strategically placed throughout the course. **You should send your answers to these tests to your tutor.** Suggested answers will be sent to you with your marked work.

As in the case of the practice tests, you should precede each lettered test with a process of revision and only attempt the test when you feel you have mastered the lessons to which it relates. This process of continuous revision is a vital part of the learning process and will help your cumulative build-up of knowledge.

The 'AS' Level and A-level System

The Advanced Subsidiary (AS) Level

Advanced Subsidiary (AS) courses have been redefined as follows:

- As a final qualification, allowing candidates to broaden their studies and to defer questions about specialism;
- As roughly half of the total A-level studies

The AS no longer constitutes the first half of an Advanced Level qualification and no marks may be carried forward to that qualification. So, if you are expecting to complete the full A-level,

there is no obligation to attempt the AS examinations at the halfway point.

The AS is designed to provide an appropriate assessment of knowledge, understanding and skills expected of candidates who have completed the first half of a full Advanced Level Qualification.

All topics and study required for AS level are also required for the full A-level, although not necessarily on the same examination paper.

The Advanced Level

The Advanced Level consists of three written exam papers, all of which must be tackled at the same exam sitting, i.e. it is no longer possible to carry forward the marks from one paper to a later sitting.

There is no coursework.

Students following this course have the option to take either the AS or the full A-level examination. Studies for the AS are confined to the first half of the course.

Grading

The AS qualification will be graded on a five-point scale: A, B, C, D and E.

The full A Level qualification will be graded on a six-point scale: A*, A, B, C, D and E.

For AS and A Level, candidates who fail to reach the minimum standard for grade E will be recorded as U (unclassified) and will not receive a qualification certificate. Individual assessment unit results will be certificated.

The Examination Structure

This information is correct at the time of publication but may be subject to change. Prior to the examination, students should contact the exam board for the latest information.

This course is designed to match the requirements of the AQA 7191 (AS) and 7192 ('A' level) specifications. The AS exam consists of two written papers (called units) while the A level has three more substantial papers.

Shelf-life of this specification

This AS specification is examined for the first time in June 2016 and the 'A' level specification is examined for the first time in June 2017. No end date has yet been set.

AS Examination

There are two compulsory units/papers, as follows:

Unit 1

50% of AS marks

Written paper, 1 hour 30 mins *60 marks*

Questions

Section A: **Education**: short answer and extended writing
40 marks

Section B: **Methods** in Context: extended writing,
20 marks

Unit 2

50% of AS marks

Written paper, 1 hour 30 mins *60 marks*

Questions

Section A: **Research Methods**; short answer and extended writing
20 marks

Section B: **Chosen Topic**; short answer and extended writing
40 marks

In Section B, candidates choose one topic from the following four options:

1. Culture and Identity
- 2. Families and Households**
3. Health
4. Work, Poverty and Welfare

We recommend that you choose (2) Families and Households.

A level Examination

There are three compulsory units/papers, as follows:

Unit 1

Written paper, 2 hours; *80 marks* *33.3% of total A level marks*

Questions

- Education: short answer and extended writing, 50 marks
- Methods in Context: extended writing, 20 marks
- Theory and Methods: extended writing, 10 marks

Unit 2

Written paper, 2 hours; 80 marks 33.3% of total A level marks

Questions

Section A: 1st chosen topic; extended writing, 40 marks

Section B: 2nd chosen topic; extended writing, 40 marks

In Section A, candidates choose one topic from the following four options (as for the AS level):

1. Culture and Identity
- 2. Families and Households**
3. Health
4. Work, Poverty and Welfare

In Section B, candidates choose one topic from the following four options:

- 5. Beliefs in Society**
6. Global Development
7. The Media
8. Stratification and Differentiation

We recommend that you choose (2) Families and Households and (5) Beliefs in Society.

Unit 3

Written paper, 2 hours; 80 marks 33.3% of total A level marks

Questions

Crime and Deviance: short answer and extended writing
50 marks

Theory and Methods: extended writing
30 marks

Why cover all the topics?

As already explained, although you will not be required to answer questions on all topics for the examination, you should as a minimum at least read **all** the Lesson Notes. As an example, we would suggest that to understand crime in our society it is important to take account of family background, levels of educational success or failure, social class and possible patterns of poverty, the groups who have the power to make and enforce the laws, the strength of community feeling, and so on. Certainly, as the course proceeds, ideas that appeared abstract and difficult will gradually become more practical and simple.

AQA Objectives

The specifications describe the Assessment Objectives (AOs) as follows:

AS level

AO1: Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of sociological theories, concepts and evidence

AO2: Apply sociological theories, concepts, evidence and research methods to a range of issues

AO3: Analyse and evaluate sociological theories, concepts, evidence and research methods in order to:

- present arguments
- make judgements
- draw conclusions.

Weighting of assessment objectives for AS level Sociology

Assessment Objectives (AOs)	Component weightings (approx. %)		Overall weighting (approx. %)
	Component 1	Component 2	
AO1	22	24	46
AO2	18	13	31
AO3	10	13	23
Overall weighting of components	50	50	100

A-level

AO1: Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of:

- sociological theories, concepts and evidence
- sociological research methods

AO2: Apply sociological theories, concepts, evidence and research methods to a range of issues

AO3: Analyse and evaluate sociological theories, concepts, evidence and research methods in order to:

- present arguments
- make judgements
- draw conclusions.

Weighting of assessment objectives for A-level Sociology

Assessment Objectives (AOs)	Component weightings (approx. %)			Overall weighting (approx. %)
	Component 1	Component 2	Component 3	
AO1	15	13	16	44
AO2	11	11	9	31
AO3	8	9	8	25
Overall weighting of components	33.33	33.33	33.33	100

Further Guidance

For many of you this will be the first time that you have studied Sociology. This, of course, does not mean that you have little or no knowledge of the issues that you will study. As the sociologist Professor Halsey has argued, people know and understand 95% of what is happening to them, simply by living and learning. The rôle of Sociology is to provide the other 5% by asking relevant questions and identifying general patterns of social relationships that are not necessarily recognised by those immediately involved.

The task for you is, therefore, to draw on your past experiences and background knowledge to test the accuracy of the various Sociological theories that will be presented to you, and to use them alongside the new information with which you will be provided to answer essay and examination questions.

For others, Sociology 'A' level is a progression from the GCSE course, and this provides you with some early advantage in that the issues to be discussed and the jargon will be familiar to you.

'A' level Sociology is, however, a very different animal from GCSE, focusing on some new topics, raising questions whose answers were taken-for-granted, and generally emphasising the nature and rôle of sociological theory. Your previous studies are, therefore, relevant but you will need to develop new interests and skills as you tackle this 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

AQA Publications
Unit 2, Wheel Forge Way,
Trafford Park
Manchester
M17 1EH (tel: 0870-410-1036)

or downloaded from
<http://www.ool.co.uk/0012sa>

We advise that you obtain a copy of the relevant 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.

Good luck!

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