

**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 22 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:

Pauline Wilson: *Collins Revision – GCSE Sociology for AQA* (Collins, 2010), (ISBN-13: 978-0007350599)

Although it is not compulsory, we strongly recommend that you buy or borrow this publication since it will amplify all the topics that we cover. It would certainly help you during your revision process. Working through some of the questions will

help you prepare for your examination. There is also an answer book available.

Another text which would be very helpful indeed is this one:

Pauline Wilson & Allan Kidd: *Sociology GCSE for AQA* (Collins; ISBN: 978-0007310708)

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

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

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

M. Haralambos & F.K.E. Smith: *Sociology: a New Approach*

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

21. How does the Mass Media influence us?

22. The Power of the Media

Tutor-marked Assignment G**Tutor-marked Assignment H (Practice Examination)**

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 4190 set by the Assessment and Qualifications Alliance (AQA). This syllabus (or ‘specification’) is subject to change from year to year so be sure to keep a copy of the specification that applies to the correct examination year for you.

The AQA Examination

Within the 4190 specification, there are two choices for exams, as follows:

Sociology (Short Course) 4191

Unit 1: Studying Society; Education; Families (41901)
Written Paper – 1 hour 30 mins 90 marks – 100%
Candidates answer all questions in all three sections.

Sociology (Full Course) 4192

Unit 1: Studying Society; Education; Families (41901)
Written Paper – 1 hour 30 mins 90 marks – 50%
Candidates answer all questions in all three sections.

plus

Unit 2: Crime and Deviance; Mass Media; Power; Social Inequality (41902)

Written Paper – 1 hour 30 mins 90 marks – 50%

Candidates choose three sections from four section options

Candidates answer all questions in each chosen section.

Coursework is *not* required for either course. But research skills and the ability to manage a project are tested within the examination format.

This coursepack is designed primarily for students tackling the full course.

The Subject Content is divided into sections that deal with particular kinds of social relations or with different aspects of the social structure of British society. However, teachers are encouraged to stress the connections within social life and to examine the links between various kinds of social relations. They should show the role of sociological concepts, models and perspectives concerned with both structure and process, in understanding and explaining patterns of social life.

In all areas of the specification you are encouraged to use comparisons with and examples from other societies. Candidates should be familiar with a range of terms and concepts commonly used by sociologists. You are also encouraged to undertake small scale research projects in order to develop your understanding of the practical difficulties faced by the sociologist working in the field.

However, at GCSE a detailed knowledge of the work of particular sociologists is *not* required, nor is there any requirement for coursework in this subject. Ultimately, the specification should enable candidates to use their knowledge of the world in which they live and their ability to understand and analyse it critically; it is not intended to encourage the mere transmission of factual knowledge.

Candidates should appreciate that Sociology is not a subject that can be understood in terms of isolated conceptual areas. Each section of the specification is connected and inter-related and candidates would benefit from gaining a proper appreciation of more than one section in order to develop their understanding. This will allow them to demonstrate their

ability to apply information acquired in a particular area to other parts of the specification.

Unit 1 (either course)

In Unit 1 (which comprises the whole of the Short Course) all questions are compulsory although, in two of the three compulsory sections, a choice of questions is provided for the final element of each question (this element offers candidates an opportunity to write an extended answer). This Unit focuses on three areas of the specification:

1. Studying Society;
2. Families;
3. Education.

1. Studying Society

Candidates should, at a basic level, be able to show some understanding of the distinctiveness of the sociological approach as opposed to, for example, the psychological, biological or journalistic, and should be aware that different kinds of explanations exist within sociology.

Candidates will be introduced to central terms and concepts used in sociology. For example:

- *social structures*, including the family, education and stratification systems
- *social processes*, including socialisation, social control and social change
- *social issues*, including the causes and consequences of inequality, and the sources, distribution and exercise of power and authority.

Candidates should be aware that some central terms and concepts relevant to the topic areas covered by this specification, such as class or poverty, may be defined in more than one way.

Candidates should be able to:

- describe the research process with reference to the significance of research aims, hypotheses, pilot studies, sampling procedures, data collection and analysis and evaluation

- describe the instruments of the social survey, the questionnaire and the interview, and be able to explain their use, value and limitations. They should also be able to describe the use, value and limitations of longitudinal studies
- describe the use of direct observation, participant and non-participant, by sociologists, and be aware of the value and limitations of these methods
- distinguish between primary and secondary sources of data and to describe the use, value and limitations of the latter. Candidates should have some knowledge of the construction, value and limitations of official statistics and opinion polls
- make elementary deductions from diagrams, charts, graphs and tables of statistics as well as numerical, written and other visual material
- understand the significance of evidence in sociological discussions
- plan a simple research project, having regard to the ethical issues which might arise in the course of the research process.

Candidates should be aware of ways in which sociological concepts and the results of sociological research may be useful in making and implementing policies, for example in the fields of education, welfare and criminal justice.

2. Education

Candidates should be able to:

- describe and explain, at a basic level, the present structure of the education system, and have an understanding of related debates such as those about faith schools, testing, special needs, and alternative forms of educational provision
- describe and explain, at a basic level, variations in educational achievement in terms of class, gender and ethnicity.

- identify a range of influences on educational achievement, for example, parental values, peer groups, school ethos, streaming, labelling, teacher expectation, economic circumstances, cultural and ethnic background
- describe and explain at a basic level the various functions that education is expected to fulfil today, such as serving the needs of the economy, facilitating social mobility and encouraging 'Britishness' and social cohesion.

Candidates should be aware of education as a political issue and be able, at a basic level, to explain both why education reforms have been made and criticisms of those reforms.

3. Families

Candidates should be able to:

- define 'family' and to explain the presence of diverse forms of the family in Britain today: e.g. married/non-married, couple/lone parent, heterosexual/gay, extended/nuclear and reconstituted.

Candidates should be aware of cultural diversity, migration and changing working patterns as influences on marriage and the family in Britain.

Candidates should understand that an individual might live in many different family situations during a lifetime; and should be able to explain important changes that are taking place in family structures, e.g. the increase in single person households.

Candidates should be able to:

- describe and explain role and authority relationships, e.g. between men and women, parent(s) and children, members of the wider family, describe changes in these relationships, and relate them to the factors influencing such changes
- describe and explain changes in the patterns of fertility and expectations of life and be aware of their significance for individuals, family and society generally

- describe and explain, at a basic level, different sociological approaches to the family, both positive and critical, including, for example, the functionalist, the feminist
- describe and explain changes in the pattern of divorce in Britain since 1945 and be aware of the consequence of divorce for family members and structures.

Candidates should have a basic knowledge of contemporary family-related issues, such as the quality of parenting, the relationship between teenagers and adults, care of the disabled/elderly and arranged marriage.

Unit 2

In Unit 2 (required to complete the Full Course) candidates may choose three out of four options, with a further element of choice provided in the final (extended written) element of each question. The areas of the specification included in Unit 2 are:

1. Crime and Deviance;
2. Mass Media;
3. Power;
4. Social Inequality.

Candidates for the Full Course (Units 1 and 2) are strongly advised by AQA to study **all** the subject content although, clearly, some specialisation is possible within the Unit 2 exam.

1. Crime and Deviance

Candidates should be able to:

- distinguish the concepts of crime and deviance
- describe the ways in which individuals are encouraged to conform to social rules both formal and informal.

Candidates should be aware, at a basic level, of the social distribution of crime, e.g. class, age, gender, ethnicity and locality.

Candidates should be able to:

- outline different sociological explanations of criminal and deviant behaviour, such as sub-cultural theories, labelling theory and relative deprivation
- assess, at a basic level, the usefulness of official crime figures, and self-report and victim studies, to sociologists
- describe the significance of criminal and deviant behaviour for victims, communities and society in general.

Candidates should be aware, at a basic level, of the ways in which criminal and deviant behaviour have generated public debates in recent years.

Candidates should understand, at a basic level, the nature and significance of social problems such as racism and teenage crime.

2. Mass Media

Candidates should be able to identify the mass media and outline the major characteristics of this means of communication.

Candidates should be aware:

- that there are different views of the nature of the relationship between the mass media and audience and how this may be affected by new technologies
- of the significance of the mass media within the socialisation process and be able to describe, at a basic level, its part, along with other agents of socialisation, in the development of people's political and social identities and views
- of the media as a source of power for the individuals and organisations which own and/or control it, and be able to describe and explain the exercise of this power through, for example, agenda setting, the creation and dissemination of positive/negative images of particular groups/ organisations, e.g. environmentalists, animal rights activists and lone parents

- of the potential significance for the distribution of power of technological developments, such as the internet
- of the ways in which the media may encourage stereotyping, and be able to describe the process
- of deviancy amplification
- of contemporary media related issues, such as whether media exposure encourages violence.

3. Power

Candidates should have a basic understanding of the role of citizens in the political process in Britain.

Candidates should be able to:

- describe the opportunities for, and limitations on, participation in the political process, at local and national level, by individuals and communities and sections of society
- explain what might increase or lower the chances of such participation being successful
- explain how and why social factors such as age, gender, ethnicity and class influence the pattern of political participation and the distribution of political authority and power

Candidates should be aware of the ways in which governments have attempted to alleviate social problems, such as those associated with discrimination, including the ageing population, unemployment and poverty.

Candidates should be able to describe, at a basic level, the different political positions in debates about the Welfare State.

Candidates should be aware, at a basic level, of the nature and significance of power relationships in 'everyday' situations, such as those between employees and employers;

children, parents, school teachers and other children; members of the public and the police.

4. Social Inequality

Candidates should be able to:

- describe and explain the nature of stratification as involving the unequal distribution of wealth, income, status and power
- describe and use appropriately the major concepts involved in the analysis of stratification, including class, status and life chances
- identify and describe forms of stratification based on class, gender, ethnicity, age and religion
- describe and explain the ways in which life chances are influenced by differences in wealth, income, power and status; and describe and explain the relationship between such inequalities and social factors such as class, gender and ethnicity.

Candidates should be able, at a basic level, to

- describe different sociological explanations of poverty, and be aware of the strengths and weaknesses of such explanations, for example, the cycle of poverty, the culture of poverty, structural explanations, welfare dependency, long-term unemployment and exclusion.

Candidates should be aware of continuities in the recent pattern of inequality and should have an understanding of major debates about stratification, such as whether modern Britain is becoming a meritocracy/classless society, whether class inequality/division has become less significant than inequalities/divisions based on gender, ethnicity or age.

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. 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.

Project Work

Although there is no coursework with this specification, it is important that you learn how to conduct and interpret sociological research projects. Various ideas of optional projects are given in the course of your studies and you are encouraged to tackle at least one of these. There are also sections which aim to develop your practical and fieldwork skills and your ability to analyse results and write a report. This will stand you in good stead if you go on to study sociology at a higher level.

Tutor-Marked Assignments

The course includes seven tutor-marked assignments. These should be attempted at specific points in the course, after lessons 4, 8, 11, 15, 18, 20 and 22. These tests consist of questions which have mostly been adapted from specimen examination papers devised by AQA and other boards.

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!

AQA Aims

The aims of this course are the same as the aims listed in the AQA specification. Please refer to the AQA website for full details. The stated aims for this subject are for the student to:

- recognise that their sociological knowledge, understanding and skills help them to develop an understanding of the interrelationships between individuals, groups, institutions and societies

- analyse critically the nature and sources of information and to base reasoned judgements and arguments on evidence
- organise and communicate their knowledge and understanding in different and creative ways, and reach substantiated judgements.

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://store.aqa.org.uk/qual/newgcse/pdf/AQA-4190-W-SP-10.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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