

**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 or A level Sociology 2190 specification, set by the Assessment and Qualifications Alliance (AQA).

No coursework is required.

The **Subject Code** for entry to the AS only award is **1191**.

The **Subject Code** for entry to the A2 (A level) award is **2191**.

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

A level Sociology is divided into four modules (two at AS level and two at A2 level). Each exam paper contains 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.

AS Level

Introduction to Sociology

1. What is Sociology?
2. Introduction to Research Methods
Tutor-marked Assignment A

Module One: Culture, Families and Wealth (SCLY1)

This module is worth 40% of your AS grade. The exam is 60 minutes long. Candidates choose to answer questions on Culture or Families or Poverty.

3. Culture and Identity
4. **Families and Households (1)**
Tutor-marked Assignment B
5. **Families and Households (2)**
Tutor-marked Assignment C
6. Wealth and Poverty
7. Welfare

Module Two: Education, Health and Sociological Methods (SCLY2)

This module is worth 60% of your AS grade. The exam is 120 minutes long. Candidates choose to answer questions on Education with Research Methods or Health with Research Methods.

8. **Education (1)**
Tutor-marked Assignment D
9. **Education (2)**
Tutor-marked Assignment E
10. Health
11. **Sociological Methods**
Tutor-marked Assignment F

A2 Level

Module Three: Beliefs, Development, Media and Politics (SCLY3)

This module is worth 40% of your A2 grade. The exam is 90 minutes long. Candidates choose to answer questions on Power & Politics or Media or Beliefs or Global Development.

12. Power and Politics
Tutor-marked Assignment G
13. Mass Media
Tutor-marked Assignment H
14. **Beliefs in Society (1)**
Tutor-marked Assignment I
15. **Beliefs in Society (2)**
Tutor-marked Assignment J
16. Global Development (1)
17. Global Development (2)
Tutor-marked Assignment K

Module Four: Crime, Stratification and Theory (SCLY4)

This module is worth 60% of your A2 grade. The exam is 120 minutes long. Candidates choose to answer questions on Crime with Theory and Methods or Stratification with Theory and Methods

18. Further Sociological Theories
Tutor-marked Assignment L

19. Evaluating Methods
Tutor-marked Assignment M
20. **Crime and Deviance (1)**
21. **Crime and Deviance (2)**
Tutor-marked Assignment N
22. Stratification and Social Differences
23. Final Revision
Tutor-marked Assignment O

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:

Stephen Moore, Dave Aiken and Steve Chapman, *Sociology AS for AQA* (pub. Collins Educational) ISBN: 978-0007267774

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., Sixth Edition) ISBN: 978-0007154470

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.

At A2 level

All A2 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.

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 may be used in one of two ways:

- As a final qualification, allowing candidates to broaden their studies and to defer questions about specialism;
- As the first half (50%) of an Advanced Level qualification, which must be completed before an Advanced Level award can be made.

Advanced Subsidiary 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.

The Advanced Level (AS + A2)

The Advanced Level examination is in two parts:

Advanced Subsidiary (AS) - 50% of the total award;
A second examination, called A2 - 50% of the total award

Most Advanced Subsidiary and Advanced level courses are modular. The AS level normally comprises three teaching and learning modules and the A2 comprises a further three teaching and learning modules. These modules generally match the Units of Assessment (or Exam Papers).

Examination Flexibility

'A' levels allow for considerable flexibility in the taking of exams. The two most popular options are:

- AS is completed at the end of one year and A2 at the end of the second year;
- AS and A2 are completed at the end of the same year.

Both of these options are open to students following this course as it is divided into two halves and follows the same modular sequence as the specification.

Grading and Shelf-Life

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. To be awarded an A* candidates will need to achieve a grade A on the full A Level qualification and an A* on the aggregate of the A2 units.

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.

Unit results remain available to count towards certification, whether or not they have already been used, as long as the specification is still valid. Candidates may re-sit a unit any number of times within the **shelf-life** of the specification.

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 1191 (AS) and 2191 ('A' level A2) specifications. The exam consists of four written papers (called units), two at each level.

Shelf-life of this specification

This 'A' level specification is examined for the last time in June 2016. Exams in later years (June 2017 onwards) will be based on a new specification. So we advise you to take *all* your exams, AS and A2, by June 2016. If you delay beyond that date, you may find that some of your work is wasted and that a new set of learning materials is required. If in doubt, keep an eye on the AQA website for news of the new specification.

AS Examination

Unit 1 – Unit code: SCLY1

Culture and Identity; Families and Households; Wealth, Poverty and Welfare 40% of AS, 20% of A Level

Written paper, 1 hour 60 marks

Candidates choose one topic from three and answer five questions.

In their study of this unit, candidates should

- examine topic areas in relation to the two core themes (socialisation, culture and identity; and social differentiation, power and stratification);
- consider both the evidence of and the sociological explanations for the content listed in the three topic areas.

Attention should also be given to drawing out links with other topic areas studied.

Unit 2 – Unit code: SCLY2

Education; Health; Sociological Methods
60% of AS, 30% of A Level

Written paper, 2 hours 90 marks

Candidates choose one topic (Education or Health) and answer four questions on the chosen topic, one question on sociological research methods in context and four questions on research methods.

In their study of this unit, candidates should examine

- topic areas in relation to the two core themes (socialisation, culture and identity; and social differentiation, power and stratification)
- both the evidence of and the sociological explanations for the content listed in the three topic areas.

Throughout this unit, you are encouraged to use examples drawn from your own experience of small-scale social research.

A2 Examination

Unit 3 – Unit code: SCLY3

Beliefs in Society; Global Development; Mass Media; Power and Politics 20% of A Level

Written paper, 1 hour 30 minutes 60 marks

Candidates choose one topic from four and answer two compulsory questions and one question from a choice of two.

The study of this unit should engage candidates in theoretical debate while encouraging an active involvement with the research process. The study of this unit should foster a critical awareness of contemporary social processes and change, and draw together the knowledge, understanding and skills learnt in different aspects of the course.

The examination will explicitly assess candidates' understanding of the connections between the topic(s) studied in this unit and the nature of sociological thought, methods of sociological enquiry, and the core themes (socialisation, culture and identity; and social differentiation, power and stratification). In their study of this unit, candidates should examine both the evidence of and the sociological explanations for the content listed in the four topic areas below.

Unit 4 – Unit code: SCLY4

Crime and Deviance; Stratification and Differentiation; Theory and Methods 30% of A Level marks.

Written paper, 2 hours 90 marks

Candidates choose one topic from two and answer two questions on the chosen topic, two/three questions on sociological research methods in context and one question on theory and methods.

The study of this unit should engage candidates in theoretical debate while encouraging an active involvement with the research process. Throughout this unit, candidates should be encouraged to use examples drawn from their own experience of small-scale social research. The study of this unit should foster a critical awareness of contemporary social processes and change, and draw together the knowledge, understanding and skills learnt in different aspects of the course.

The examination will explicitly assess candidates' understanding of the connections between the topic(s) studied in this unit and the nature of sociological thought, methods of sociological enquiry, and the core themes (socialisation, culture and identity; and social differentiation, power and stratification). In their study of this unit, candidates should examine both the evidence of and the sociological explanations for the content listed in the two topic areas below.

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 Overall 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:

- acquire knowledge and a critical understanding of contemporary social processes and social changes
- appreciate the significance of theoretical and conceptual issues in sociological debate
- understand and evaluate sociological methodology and a range of research methods through active involvement in the research process
- develop skills that enable individuals to focus on their personal identity, roles and responsibilities within society
- develop a lifelong interest in social issues.

There should be a focus on contemporary society. Where appropriate, comparative and/or historical materials may be introduced.

In addition, this course should enable candidates to: demonstrate a deeper understanding of the connections between the nature of sociological thought, methods of sociological enquiry and substantive sociological topics.

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

www.aqa.org.uk/qual/gce/pdf/AQA-2190-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!

Good luck!