

A-Level Sociology

Subject Handbook 2011-12



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Section One

Sociology Qualification Overview

AS SOCIOLOGY (Year 12)

Unit Code	Unit Title	Exam	Weighting
G671	Exploring Socialisation, Culture and identity	1.30hr with Pre-Release stimulus	50% of AS grade
G672	Topics in Socialisation, culture and identity: THE FAMILY	1.30hr exam	50% of AS grade

AS Unit G671: Exploring Socialisation, Culture and Identity

This unit introduces candidates to key concepts associated with developing a sociological understanding of the contemporary social world. It is intended to introduce the AS core themes of culture, socialisation and identity, whilst concurrently introducing and exploring how sociologists collect their data.

There are seven key issues to consider:

1. The formation of culture
2. The process of socialisation
3. The role of socialisation in the creation of identities
4. Exploring the research process
5. Exploring the use of quantitative data-collection methods and analysis in the context of research
6. Exploring the use of qualitative data-collection methods and analysis in the context of research
7. Exploring the use of mixed methods in the context of research

AS Unit G672: Topics in Socialisation, Culture and Identity

This unit offers a choice of substantive topics through which the themes of culture and socialisation are developed. It builds upon the knowledge and skills acquired in Unit G671 and seeks to develop an understanding of the nature of sociological thought in the context of the topics studied. Links between substantive topics, the nature of sociological thought and methods of sociological enquiry are encouraged.

Candidates will study the following: Sociology of the Family

Sociology of the Family

The family is a central institution of socialisation and a main transmitter of culture in the contemporary UK. Studying this option should allow candidates to explore contemporary family structures, relationships and changes and offers a real opportunity for them to reflect on their own social experiences of family life, culture and socialisation.

There are four key issues to consider;

1. Key concepts and key trends within the family.
2. The role of the family in society.
3. Family diversity.
4. Roles, responsibilities and relationships within the family.

A2 SOCIOLOGY (Year 13)

Unit Code	Unit Title	Exam	Weighting
G673	Power and Control: CRIME & DEVIANCE	1.30hr	50% of A2 grade
G674	Exploring Social Inequality and Difference	2hr exam	50% of A2 grade

A2 Unit G673: Power and Control

A2 Sociology is designed to enable candidates to build on the sociological understanding they acquired in AS Sociology and to develop an understanding of the A2 core themes of power, control and social inequality and differences. Links between substantive topics, sociological thought, methods of sociological enquiry and contemporary social policy are encouraged throughout the teaching of the A2 specification.

Candidates will study the following: Crime and Deviance

Sociology of Crime and Deviance

In this option, candidates explore issues of power and control through a detailed study of crime and deviance. The social construction of crime and deviance are emphasised and the role of agencies of social control and the law are explored. It aims to give an overview of different theoretical approaches to the study of crime and deviance.

It explores the following five key issues:

1. The definition and measurement of crime and deviance
2. Trends, patterns and explanations of crime and deviance
3. Patterns and explanations of victimisation
4. The role of agents of social control in the construction of crime and deviance
5. Solutions to the problem of crime.

A2 Unit G674: Exploring Social Inequality and Difference (synoptic)

This unit builds on the knowledge and skills acquired in the AS units and seeks to develop links between the nature of sociological thought, the methods of sociological enquiry and the core sociological themes of power, social inequality, socialisation, culture and identity. Candidates study and explain patterns of inequality in the contemporary UK.

There are two key issues to consider:

1. Social inequality and difference illustrated by the study of gender, class, ethnicity and age
2. Exploring sociological research on social inequality and difference.

Candidates are encouraged to think holistically and develop their skills of thinking as a sociologist.

Section Two

What is Sociology?

Everybody is part of society. Importantly, this society has helped to shape who you are and your experiences in life so far. But how much about it do you understand? There is, perhaps, more of a need than ever to understand the world we live in. Just think about the endless public debate there is on issues such as knife crimes, 'binge drinking' teenagers, boys' underachievement in school, the reasons and effects of single-parenthood and births outside of marriage, questions of racial and sexual equality, the effects of the media on violent behaviour and so many more. They are the subject matter of countless views and opinions, many of which may be ill-informed or prejudiced. Many views are expressed simply from personal (and often very limited) experience.

This is where Sociology comes in - because they are all **SOCIAL** issues. The literal meaning of the word 'Sociology' is the 'science of society'. The interaction of people, ourselves, as members of society is what Sociology is about. Social events and changes do not occur by accident. Sociology attempts to bring a systematic understanding to our knowledge of what goes on around us - locally, nationally and even internationally. Using a variety of models and theories and applying recognised research methods the Sociologist sets off to try and understand our human condition a little better. This can be a demanding task - but an interesting and rewarding one!

In a sense 'doing' Sociology is a continuous series of debates with and by . . . Sociologists! We spend most of our time studying what sociologists have found out and how their conclusions are debated, argued and disagreed with by other people who may have other ideas and see things quite differently. Throughout the course we will debate, among other things, questions such as:

- Why do some people commit more crime than others?
- Why are girls now out-performing boys in school?
- Will divorce continue to rise? If so, what are the consequences?
- Do children need fathers?
- Does the media cause violence?
- Are the police racist?
- Is society less religious?
- Does your IQ determine how well you will do in school?

Sociology, then, is the study of people in society. It is concerned with human associations and relationships in the institutions that affect our lives. Such institutions include the family, education, the police/judiciary, the media, religion and politics. In particular, Sociology is often characterised with describing and explaining patterns of inequality, deprivation and conflict, which are a feature of almost all societies.

Section Three

Studying Sociology

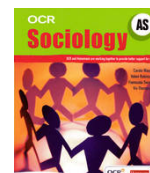
Sociology is a subject that involves extensive reading. This is because unlike some other A-level courses, sociology is an open-ended subject – there is always something new being written about any topic area within the subject. Students are expected to keep up with current events which have a sociological angle e.g. educational policy changes, or debates on debt in the developing world or crime in the UK. Students who keep up with recent current events are able to impress the examiners and gain those crucial extra marks.

Standard texts:

OCR AS SOCIOLOGY BY CAROLE WAUGH ET AL.

Published by Heinemann

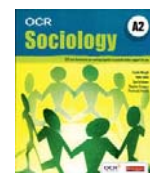
Each student is required to own a copy of this book. It accompanies the course and is referred to throughout your AS studies. It contains valuable advice from the examiners, and extension task suggestions to complement your understandings. (ISBN: 978-0-435467-38-8)



OCR A2 SOCIOLOGY BY CAROLE WAUGH ET AL.

Published by Heinemann

Each student is required to own a copy of this book. It accompanies the course and is referred to throughout your A2 studies. It contains valuable advice from the examiners, and extension task suggestions to complement your understandings. (ISBN: 978-0-435806-94-1)



SOCIOLOGY A2 FOR OCR

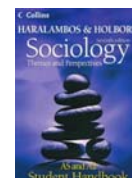
Published by Collins

This is a good textbook, but brief in some areas, for example Crime and Deviance. This book must be used in collaboration with other textbooks to gain a full understanding of the issues.



SOCIOLOGY: THEMES AND PERSPECTIVES BY HARALAMBOS & HORBORN.

A great book for A2 Sociology, but generally written in very sophisticated terms. This should be the last book that you use when researching. Use the other textbooks first and then really cap off your understanding by using this book. This textbook is NOT exam-specific (ISBN: 978-0-00-724595-6)



Further reading

Further reading of the resources contained within the library must be carried out if you hope to gain that extra advantage over students. The library is well stocked and even contains Sociology Review, which has some great contemporary debates and exam tips in it.

Section Four

Humanities Faculty Expectations

Our expectations

Attendance & Punctuality

Sociologists at QK need to be self-disciplined. This includes their attendance and punctuality to lessons. You will be expected to attend every lesson on time. Students who miss MORE than one lesson over two weeks will receive contact home from the Head of Sociology, and set extra work for 'Friday Catch up'.

Students who miss lessons (for authorised reasons) should...

1. Speak to the teacher before the lesson if possible.
2. Complete all classwork missed, finding the teacher to ask for help if needed in their own time.
3. Make sure they know all homework and deadlines. These must also be caught up on.
4. Be up to speed BY THE NEXT LESSON.
5. Failure to do so will result in 'Friday Catch-up', and contact home.

Students who are more than five minutes late for a QK Sociology lesson, as per school policy, will not be admitted into class. The same protocol will be as above for each and every lesson. Studying Sociology requires a focus which cannot be disrupted by poor punctuality, or coming to class unprepared.

Commitment to Learning

A-Level QK students should be role models for those in the rest of the school. Therefore the QK Sociology department expects a full commitment from its students to their studies. Students who fail to show this mature attitude to learning can expect sanctions in compliance with the lower school behaviour policy. QK Sixth Form learners can expect detentions, Sociology report and/or referral to DOL for any inappropriate behaviour or action which may affect their, or others learning.

Sociology AS students are required to complete at least 6 hours a week of Sociological study outside of the classroom. This is a minimum amount as good Sociologists will take time to read around the topic as well as complete the homework expected. Students will complete, on average between the two modules, one exam question a week and one other piece of work (this can range from note-taking to a piece of extended writing). It is expected that after we complete work in class students will use their own time to go over sections they are still unsure on and consolidate their learning.

Students who fail to meet the homework standards set will be required to do so, in 'Friday Catch-up' in the Sixth form learning centre. Persistent non-compliance with either homework or behavioural expectations will result in departmental detention held by Mr Butler every Monday in L2A.

Across A-Level Sociology students will study a broad range of themes and periods. Therefore it is essential that students can organise their thoughts and resources to keep clarity in their work. In order to achieve this you must purchase a folder for each module and keep your learning organised. Students will be required to buy lined paper, pens and ring binders and bring these to EVERY lesson.

Your expectations

Teaching

The QK Sociology department recognises that all students learn in different ways and aims to incorporate these different learning styles into lessons at A-Level. However, in Year 13 students should be prepared to experience more research/writing based tasks to prepare them for possible entry into university degrees. Sociology teaching at A-Level is often discussion or debate focused. This means students should feel comfortable to discuss their own opinions or challenge the opinions of others. Teachers will use a variety of multimedia resources to aid learning as well as support from textbooks.

Assessment

The QK Sociology faculty policy requires students to be formally assessed every two weeks. This means that each student will be given formal feedback on a given task. This will often be in the form of an essay but could also be on other tasks such as from verbal presentations or pieces of source analysis. Feedback can also be peer assessment which is monitored by the teacher. Students will also be asked to self assess their work to show they can identify what successes and weaknesses are in their own work. Students will be given exam-style mark schemes with which to do this.

Students should receive two blue sticker assessments each half term and two green sticker assessments each term. The green sticker assessment will be your formal assessment for each term. Students who get two levels below their target grade in these assessments will be expected to redo the assessment and come up with a strategy to improve their performance with their teacher.

Sociology Skills

As mentioned in the introduction there are many different skills involved in studying Sociology. Sociology is not just about memorising sociologists and studies. Students who spend their time memorising will not score highly in tests as they have missed out the most important parts of becoming an Sociologist. The following list summarises a few of the key skills of Sociology A-Level and ways you might approach the study of them.

Reading and note taking

Reading and note taking are core skills in Sociology A-Level. If reading fills you with dread, Sociology will be very challenging for you. However, there are some basic ways in which reading and note taking can be made easier.

- a) Before you read a chapter flick through and look at the main headings and subheadings so you know where that chapter is heading. This will enable you to set out your notes in a logical format.
- b) Organise your notes in a way that makes sense to you. For example you may want to use sub-headings or highlighters to show important points. You could make a timeline or list of the key characters in a period.
- c) Do not get tempted to write everything down. Copying sentences word for word will not make the information stay in your long term memory. Instead read, cover the sentence/paragraph and write it in your own words.
- d) Finally, keep your mind active when reading. Ask questions about what you read. You could even keep a notebook with these questions in. This would ensure that you are focused on the text and not passively accepting the information. This links back to section a) here.
- e) As you read, and revise your notes, create shorter and more concise summaries. The end goal of this is that as you approach your final exams you have the most brief notes possible. This will only work if you are constantly revising and re-reading your notes *throughout the academic year*.

Section Five

Exam Technique and Essay-Writing

Sociology demands strong written ability. Within sociology we train you specifically to develop the skills for the assessment of the examinations. We will provide you with specific exam-focused support booklets, writing frames, model answers and also a breakdown on how to get an A grade. It is important that you understand how to write an effective essay as you can transfer these skills to many of the exam questions you will face over the next two years.

The Technique

Essay writing does not come easy to most of us. However, if you follow the following rules of thumb, your skills in this technique will improve:

Before you start writing the main body of the essay, put together an **essay plan** so you know from the beginning what main points you intend to use. Don't write off the top of your head. Get organised from the very beginning.

Decode the question – work out what the examiners are looking for from the key words in the question. Remember, examiners are not setting out to fool you – the question includes distinct clues as to the direction you should take. The main skill is thinking. What are the key words in the question? What viewpoint, if any, is being expressed? What sort of sociologist would support/oppose this view?

Your **introduction** should show the examiner that you have succeeded in decoding the question. It should therefore '**set the scene**' of the essay by telling the examiner what perspective or position the essay title is coming from and what sociologists support or challenge that position. If any sociological **concepts or technical terms** are used in the essay title, e.g. 'the extended family', 'the hidden curriculum' etc **define** these in the introduction.

The **main body** of your essay should focus on **answering the question set rather than the question you hoped would be set**. Remember no question is ever going to demand that you write everything you know about a particular topic. **You must respond to the specific demands of the question**. Many candidates fail to achieve marks because they have not kept to the focus of the question. Six key words come to mind here which should help you keep that focus:

Discussion and Development-you should summarise the main points of any theory or argument you think supports the point of view in the essay title. This may take one or two paragraphs. Perhaps begin this section with the essay title showing how the theory you are going to discuss supports it, e.g. 'the functionalist theory of the family strongly supports the view that...' Development is quite simply **the detail**, e.g. the names of particular sociologists, for example, you might explain how two or three sociologists are linked to the theoretical position you have earlier outlined.

Illustration – this is the material that shows that the theory and argument is supported by **empirical studies or statistical data**. Where possible, you should try and bring in examples of **recent or current events or social policies** to illustrate the points you are making.

Thread – make sure that your content has **coherence** – an argument should be seen running through the essay from beginning to end. The best way to ensure this is to refer to the essay title reasonably often, usually at the start of a paragraph introducing a theory showing how it fits into the overall argument.

Evaluation – this is very much part of the development of the essay too because it generally focuses on those theories, arguments, studies etc that don't fit into the argument contained in the essay title. Evaluation generally takes three forms:

It can **focus on specific weaknesses, criticisms** etc of particular theories, for example you might be critical of its methodology.

It can take the format of **summarizing alternative theories, arguments and studies**. If this is the approach you take, you must not forget to clearly state why the alternative is a critique of the argument in the essay title.

However, don't forget that a balanced evaluation is always going to focus on **some strengths of the main argument**. Whatever form your evaluation takes, make clear to the examiner that this is precisely what you are doing by using evaluative linking words and phrases such as **'however'**, **'nevertheless'**, **'on the other hand'**, **'by comparison'**, **'in contrast to this'** etc.

Conclusion – many students forget to include this important part of an essay. Don't just repeat what you've already said. Using the essay title again as your opening line, attempt to draw all the strands of your argument together so that you come to a conclusion that is supported by your content. If you prefer to sit