

GCE Sociology

OCR Advanced Subsidiary GCE in Sociology H181

OCR Advanced GCE in Sociology H581

version 2 – October 2008

specification

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1 About these Qualifications

This booklet contains OCR's Advanced Subsidiary GCE and Advanced GCE specifications in Sociology for teaching from September 2008.

These specifications focus on contemporary society. They are designed to foster the development of critical and reflective thinking with a respect for social diversity; and to encourage an awareness of the importance of social structure and social action in explaining social issues. Candidates are encouraged to develop their own sociological awareness through active engagement with the contemporary social world.

Introduction

These specifications are designed to provide candidates with an introduction to sociology that emphasises contemporary social processes and social changes, whilst also fostering an ethos of critical inquiry within candidates, encouraging them to explore the social world and to reflect on their own social experiences. These specifications adopt a thematic approach throughout, covering:

- **socialisation, culture and identity at AS level;**
- **power, control and social stratification at A2 level.**

The nature of sociological thought forms an integral part of, and is assessed throughout, these specifications. The methods of sociological enquiry should be taught throughout each unit and they are directly assessed by means of 'a methods in context' question in Units G671 and G674.

These specifications are set out in the form of teaching units. Each teaching unit is assessed by its associated unit of assessment. The key content/issues should not preclude the teaching of other relevant knowledge as necessary. The sociological understanding of topics is likely to be strengthened by links made between topics and units wherever possible.

1.1 The Two-Unit AS

The Advanced Subsidiary GCE is both a 'stand-alone' qualification and also the first half of the corresponding Advanced GCE. The AS GCE is assessed at a standard appropriate for candidates who have completed the first year of study (both in terms of teaching time and content) of the two-year Advanced GCE course, i.e. between GCSE and Advanced GCE.

From September 2008 the AS GCE is made up of **two** mandatory units, which are externally assessed and form 50% of the corresponding four-unit Advanced GCE.

The AS specification focuses on the themes of socialisation, culture and identity.

1.2 The Four-Unit Advanced GCE

From September 2008 the Advanced GCE is made up of **two** mandatory units at AS and **two** further units at A2. These A2 units are also externally assessed.

The Advanced GCE specification also focuses on the themes of power, control and social stratification. Overleaf is an outline of the four-unit specification:

1.3 Qualification Titles and Levels

These qualifications are shown on a certificate as:

- OCR Advanced Subsidiary GCE in Sociology.
- OCR Advanced GCE in Sociology.

Both qualifications are Level 3 in the National Qualification Framework (NQF).

1.4 Aims

The aims of these specifications are to encourage candidates 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.

1.5 Prior Learning/Attainment

No prior knowledge of the subject is required. The specifications build on, but do not depend on, the knowledge, understanding and skills specified for GCSE Sociology. It is recommended that candidates have attained communication and literacy skills at a level equivalent to GCSE Grade C in English.

2 Summary of Content

2.1 AS Units

Unit G671: *Exploring socialisation, culture and identity*

- Formation of culture
- Process of socialisation
- Role of socialisation in the creation of identities
- Exploring the research process
- Exploring the use of quantitative data-collection methods and analysis in the context of research
- Exploring the use of qualitative data-collection methods and analysis in the context of research
- Exploring the use of mixed methods in the context of research

Unit G672: *Topics in socialisation, culture and identity*

One topic from:

- Sociology of the **family**
 - key concepts and key trends within the family
 - the role of the family in society
 - family diversity
 - roles, responsibilities and relationships within the family
- Sociology of **health**
 - key concepts and the social construction of health and illness
 - patterns and explanations of ill health in society
 - the social construction of mental illness and disability
 - the role of health professionals in society
- Sociology of **religion**
 - key concepts and the changing nature of religious movements in society
 - the role of religion in society
 - religion and social position
 - the strength of religion in society
- Sociology of **youth**
 - key concepts and the social construction of youth
 - the role of youth culture/subcultures in society
 - the relationship between youth and subculture
 - the experience of young people in education.

2.2 A2 Units

Unit G673: *Power and control*

One topic from:

- Sociology of **crime and deviance**
 - definition and measurement of crime and deviance
 - trends, patterns and explanations of crime and deviance
 - victimisation
 - role of agents of social control in the construction of crime and deviance
 - solutions to the problem of crime
 - Sociology of **education**
 - structure and organisation of the education system
 - role and function of education in society
 - differential educational achievement
 - relationship between education and the economy
 - education and social policy
 - Sociology of the **mass media**
 - defining and researching the mass media
 - ownership and control of the media
 - construction of the news
 - media representations of social groups
 - effect of the media on society
 - Sociology of **power and politics**
 - defining and exploring political action in society
 - participation in and emergence of new social movements
 - changing patterns of political action
 - political ideologies and their relationship to political action
 - nature and distribution of political power in society.
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Unit G674: *Exploring social inequality and difference*

- Social inequality and difference, illustrated by the study of:
 - gender
 - class
 - ethnicity
 - age.
 - Exploring sociological research on social inequality and difference:
 - practical concerns
 - theoretical issues.
-

3 AS Unit Content

The AS specification content is set out in **three** parts:

- **Key issues** – the key issues to be explored.
- **Key content** – sociological concepts and theories which should be included for each key issue.
- **Guidance notes.**

Candidates are encouraged to carry out their own small-scale research projects as a way of enhancing a sociological understanding of methodology, substantive topic areas and the core themes.

This specification is centred on the sociology of the contemporary UK. It is important for teachers to focus on this as they read through the key issues. This does not preclude the teaching of classic sociological studies if they assist candidate learning, but the focus of the specification and the assessment is on the contemporary UK.

3.1 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. Links between methods of sociological enquiry, contemporary social policy and the core themes are encouraged throughout the teaching of this unit.

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**

1. The formation of culture

Key content and guidance notes

Concepts, including:

- norms;
- values;
- status;
- culture;
- roles.

Candidates should have clear definitions of each concept as they form an integral part of this unit.

Types of cultures:

- high culture;
- popular culture;
- subculture;
- cultural diversity;
- multiculturalism;
- consumer culture;
- global culture.

Candidates should have clear definitions of each type of culture, an overview of how cultures are formed and the processes of how they may change over time. Cross-cultural material may be used here.

2. The process of socialisation

Key content and guidance notes

Process of socialisation, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• nature/nurture;• primary socialisation;• secondary socialisation;• formal social control;• informal social control.	An overview of the process of socialisation and how it links with the formation of culture/s. Formal and informal mechanisms of social control should be considered.
Agents of socialisation: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• family;• education;• media;• religion;• peer group;• workplace.	Candidates should have an overview of each agent, in terms of how they socialise individuals and groups. Concepts such as the hidden curriculum, peer-group pressure, and consumerism could be referred to.

3. The role of socialisation in the creation of identities

Key content and guidance notes

Identity: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• socialisation and identity;• culture and identity.	This is an introduction to the concept of identity. Candidates should consider what identity is and how socialisation and culture may influence the creation and reinforcement of it.
Socialisation in relation to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• gender identities;• femininities;• masculinities;• social-class identities;• ethnic identities;• ethnic hybrids;• age identities;• old age;• middle age;• youth.	<p>Candidates should consider how gender, class, ethnic and age identities are created and reinforced by the agents of socialisation covered in key issue two.</p> <p>Candidates should consider a range of different social class identities, e.g. upper-, middle-, and working-class identities, and associated concepts.</p> <p>Candidates should consider a range of different ethnic groups, e.g. Irish, Welsh, African-Caribbean, to give an overview. The process of hybridisation should be taught.</p>

4. Exploring the research process

Key content and guidance notes

Stages and issues in the research process, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• research questions;• operationalisation;• primary data collection methods;• secondary data collection methods;• sampling;• access;• ethics;• pilot studies;• interpretation of data.	Candidates should be given an overview of the main stages of social research and the main principles of research design. The implications of sampling size and type should be introduced; but an in-depth knowledge of sampling techniques is not required.
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4. Exploring the research process (continued)

Key content and guidance notes

Key concepts in the research process:

- validity;
- reliability;
- representativeness;
- generalisability.

Candidates should have clear definitions of each concept, as they form an integral part of this unit.

5. Exploring the use of quantitative data-collection methods and analysis in the context of research

Key content and guidance notes

Quantitative data collection methods:

- questionnaires;
- structured interviews;
- statistical data (official and non-official);
- content analysis.

Candidates should be given an overview of quantitative methods of data collection, looking at the advantages and disadvantages of each, and the topics that they may be suitable for researching.

Key concepts:

- patterns;
- trends;
- cause and effect;
- positivism;
- reliability;
- objectivity;
- value freedom;
- quantitative data analysis.

Candidates should consider the uses of quantitative methods in sociological research. Give examples of quantitative data to interpret and analyse. Stress the uses and limitations of it. The relationship between positivism and quantitative data should be taught but a detailed working knowledge of it is not expected.

6. Exploring the use of qualitative data-collection methods in the context of research

Key content and guidance notes

Qualitative data collection methods:

- observation;
- unstructured interviews;
- semi-structured interviews;
- personal documents;
- ethnography;
- focus groups.

Candidates should be given an overview of qualitative methods of data collection looking at the advantages and disadvantages of each and the topics that they may be suitable for researching.

Key concepts:

- meanings and experiences;
- interpretivism;
- Verstehen;
- validity;
- empathy;
- rapport;
- qualitative data analysis.

Candidates should consider the uses of qualitative methods in sociological research. Give examples of qualitative data to interpret and analyse. Stress the uses and limitations of it. The relationship between interpretivism and qualitative data should be taught but a detailed working knowledge of it is not expected.

7. Exploring the use of mixed methods in the context of research

Key content and guidance notes

Key concepts: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• triangulation;• methodological pluralism;• fitness for purpose.	Candidates should consider why many contemporary sociological researchers adopt this approach to their research.
Mixed methods data analysis.	Candidates should consider the uses of mixed methods in sociological research. Give examples of data to interpret and analyse. Stress the uses and limitations of it.

3.2 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 choose to study **one** of the following:

- **Sociology of the family**
- **Sociology of health**
- **Sociology of religion**
- **Sociology of youth.**

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.**

1. Key concepts and key trends within the family

Key content and guidance notes

Key concepts:

- nuclear families;
- extended families;
- households.

This is an introduction to the family.

Stress key definitions, key structural trends and the importance of extended family networks in contemporary society.

Trends in families and households:

- family size;
- marriage;
- divorce;
- cohabitation;
- single-parent families;
- single-person households.

Trends over the past 30 years, longer only if they illustrate a significant point (e.g. Divorce Reform Acts)

2. The role of the family in society

Key content and guidance notes

Functionalism	Functionalist views of the role of the family and an evaluation of the views. Include views on the domestic division of labour. Stress positive role of nuclear family.
Marxism	Marxist views of the family and evaluation of the views. Stress conflict and change.

3. Family diversity

Key content and guidance notes

Different types of family diversity: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• single-parent families;• beanpole families;• reconstituted families;• cultural diversity;• class diversity;• sexual diversity.	The key issue to explore is the range and extent of diversity in contemporary family life.
Contemporary views of family diversity: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• post-modern;• New Right.	Contemporary views of family diversity, which should include postmodernism and New Right ideas. New Labour views can be referred to. Include evaluation of each.

4. Roles, responsibilities and relationships within the family

Key content and guidance notes

Roles, responsibilities and relationships in family life, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• between men and women;• between children and parents.	The key issues are the relationship between men and women in family life, and between children and parents. Links should be made to current Government policy.
Sociological explanations: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• functionalist;• Marxist;• feminist explanations (liberal, Marxist, radical).	A range of theories/explanations should be covered with an evaluation of each. You could include reference to the dark side of family life as a criticism of functionalism.
Demographic changes, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• ageing population;• family size.	Demographic changes and the impact on family life. Changes such as an ageing population, the importance of carers, smaller family size, and reliance on extended kin could be considered.

Sociology of Health

The study of the sociology of health and illness is directly relevant to all core themes of the specification. Experience of, and attitudes to, health and illness are socially constructed and at the same time illustrate some of the greatest social inequalities in society. Studying this option allows candidates to explore cultural attitudes to health and illness whilst beginning to explore the theme of inequality. It offers a real opportunity for them to reflect on their own cultural and social experiences.

There are four key issues to consider:

- 1. Key concepts and the social construction of health and illness**
- 2. Patterns and explanations of ill health in society**
- 3. The social construction of mental illness and disability**
- 4. The role of health professionals in society.**

1. Key concepts and the social construction of health and illness

Key content and guidance notes

Key concepts:

- health;
- illness;
- sickness;
- bio-medical approaches;
- social model of health;
- morbidity and mortality rates.

This is an introduction to the topic so give an overview of the terminology and stress the distinction between health and illness. Introduce different models for understanding health and illness.

Social construction of health and illness:

- cultural relativity;
- lay definitions;
- the social process of becoming ill.

This is an introduction to the core idea of the socially created differences in healthcare. Cultural differences within the UK could be used to illustrate how the terms 'health' and 'illness' are socially constructed.

2. Patterns and explanations of ill health in society

Key content and guidance notes

Patterns of ill health in society by:

- social class;
- gender;
- ethnicity.

Mortality and morbidity rates and official reports on health inequalities could both be considered.

Sociological explanations of the patterns:

- artefact explanations;
- social selection explanations;
- cultural explanations;
- structural explanations.

The explanations need to be evaluated.

3. The social construction of mental illness and disability

Key content and guidance notes

Definitions, diagnosis and trends of mental illness by:

- ethnicity;
- class;
- gender.

An exploration of labelling as it applies to mental illness and an opportunity to introduce interactionist theory.

Sociological explanations:

- structural;
- interactionist.

The explanations need to be evaluated.

Disability.

Medical and social models.

Focus on how disability is socially constructed through changing definitions over time and the different interpretations of it (medical/social models).

4. The role of health professionals in society

Key content and guidance notes

Medical professionals and their role in society.

Sociological explanations:

- functionalism;
- Marxism;
- Weberianism;
- feminism.

The explanations need to be evaluated.

The rise of complementary/alternative medicine.

Candidates should consider the extent to which alternative medicines are complementary to the medical model (medical professionals) or a challenge to it.

Sociology of Religion

Religion is an important aspect of culture, socialisation and identity. The role and significance of religion in contemporary society is the subject of debate within sociology. Studying this option should allow candidates to explore these debates and issues while focusing on examples of contemporary religious movements in the UK.

There are four key issues to consider:

1. **Key concepts and the changing nature of religious movements in society**
2. **The role of religion in society**
3. **Religion and social position**
4. **The strength of religion in society.**

1. Key concepts and the changing nature of religious movements in society

Key content and guidance notes

Key concepts:

- religious belief;
- religious commitment;
- religious membership;
- religiosity.

This is an introduction to the topic, so give an overview of the terminology especially the problem of definition and membership.

Different types of religious institution and movements:

- churches;
- denominations;
- new religious movements;
- New Age movements;
- religious fundamentalism.

Give an overview of different types of religious institution, church/denomination, and compare with religious movements and New Age movements. Consider fundamentalist movements, their aims and practices. Illustrate with contemporary examples.

2. The role of religion in society

Key content and guidance notes

Sociological explanations:

- functionalism;
- Marxism;
- Weberianism.

Give an overview of the theories using classic studies but applying them to contemporary society. Neo-Marxist views may be used here. Some use of historical material may help. An evaluation of the theories and concepts is needed.

- post-modern views.

Introduce post-modern ideas of diversity and their impact on religion. A detailed knowledge is not expected.

3. Religion and social position

Key content and guidance notes

Religiosity according to:

- ethnicity;
- gender;
- social class;
- age.

This section seeks to explore trends in religiosity. Teachers are encouraged to make links between each wherever possible.

3. Religion and social position (continued)

Key content and guidance notes

New religious movements/New Age movements. Explore the appeal of new religious movements/New Age movements to different social groups.

4. The strength of religion in society

Key content and guidance notes

Evidence indicating the secularisation of society. A range of evidence, indicating that secularisation of society is taking place, should be explored. This section should draw on material already covered to some extent.

Evidence against the secularisation of society. A range of evidence questioning the secularisation of society should be explored. This section should draw on material already covered to some extent. Emphasise the rise of non-Christian and non-traditional Christian religions, and religious pluralism.

Sociology of Youth

Youth is a crucial period in the socialisation process when individuals are developing a sense of identity. Youth culture is a contested concept that links age with the formation of culture and subculture. Studying this option allows candidates to engage with the concept of youth culture and offers a real opportunity for them to reflect on their own social experiences.

There are four key issues to consider:

- 1. Key concepts and the social construction of youth**
- 2. The role of youth culture/subcultures in society**
- 3. Youth and deviance**
- 4. The experience of youth in education.**

1. Key concepts and the social construction of youth

Key content and guidance notes

Key concepts:

- youth;
- youth culture;
- youth subcultures;
- peer group;
- spectacular youth subcultures.

This is an introduction to the topic so give an overview of the concepts. Distinguish between youth culture and youth subcultures. Introduce gender and class differences. Include reasons for the development of youth culture/youth subcultures.

Social construction of youth, including the role of:

- the media;
- consumption;
- schooling;
- demographic trends;
- globalisation;
- the economy.

This is an introduction to the role of youth in society. Functionalist explanations of youth culture should be explored. Marxist ideas could be introduced here as a means of evaluating them.

2. The role of youth culture/subcultures in society

Key content and guidance notes

Sociological explanations:

- functionalism;
- Marxism;
- feminism;
- post-modern views.

Give an overview of each theoretical approach, focusing on issues such as the generation gap, resistance, male-stream sociology and 'style over substance'. The work of the CCCS in relation to social class should be covered in Marxism.

An evaluation of each theory is needed.

Issues relating to gender:

- feminism;
- girl subcultures;
- post-modern views.

The theoretical approaches covered above will be useful here.

Issues relating to ethnicity:

- racism;
- ethnocentrism;
- resistance;
- hybrid subcultures.

3. Youth and Deviance

Key content and guidance notes

Key concepts, patterns and trends:

- delinquency;
- deviance;
- crime;
- labelling;
- moral panics;
- pattern and trends in youth deviance according to social class, gender and ethnicity.

Stress the socially constructed nature of deviance.

Patterns and trends within the last 30 years.

Sociological explanations of the patterns and trends:

- functionalism
- Marxism
- labelling theory.

Teachers should use one of the functionalist sub-cultural writers (Miller, A. Cohen, etc). The CCS work can be applied for Marxist sub-cultural theory.

Concepts such as the self-fulfilling prophecy would support the exploration of labelling.

4. The experience of youth in education

Key content and guidance notes

The experience of schooling by:

- class;
- gender;
- ethnicity.

Explore what is meant by the experience of schooling. The emphasis should be on the process of socialisation and the formation of culture and identities within schools.

Patterns and trends in subject choice.

Use Marxism, feminism and functionalism to explain the different experiences of social groups in schools.

Pro- and anti-school subcultures.
Pro- and anti-education subcultures.

Use examples to explore pro- and anti-school subcultures and their role.

A2 Unit Content

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. Methodological understanding is assessed directly, in Unit G674, by means of 'a methods in context' question. Teaching methodological issues in Unit G673 is also strongly encouraged.

Candidates are encouraged to carry out their own small scale research projects as a way of enhancing a sociological understanding of methodology, substantive topic areas and the core themes.

3.3 A2 Unit G673: *Power and Control*

Candidates choose to study **one** out of the following:

- **Sociology of crime and deviance**
- **Sociology of education**
- **Sociology of the mass media**
- **Sociology of power and politics.**

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.**

1. The definition and measurement of crime and deviance

Key content and guidance notes

Definition and measurement of crime and deviance:

- crime;
- deviance;
- relativity;
- social construction.

This is an introduction, so provide an exploration of the relativity of crime and deviance over time and between cultures.

Methods for measuring crime:

- official statistics;
- victim surveys;
- self-report studies.

Give an overview of the different methods, and examples of each, including advantages and disadvantages.

Link the methods to theories, such as Marxism, left realism, interactionism and feminism as the unit progresses.

2. Trends, patterns and explanations of crime and deviance

Key content and guidance notes

Trends and patterns related to crime by:

- gender;
- ethnicity;
- social class;
- geographical location;
- age.

Candidates need to consider evidence of trends and patterns. You may want to look at trends over the last 25–30 years.

Theoretical explanations:

- functionalism
- subculturalism
- Marxism
- new criminology
- interactionism
- realism (left and right)
- New Right
- feminism

Candidates need to consider the contribution each theory has made to an explanation of crime. This should include relevant conceptual and empirical evidence and an evaluation of each.

3. Patterns and explanations of victimisation

Key content and guidance notes:

Patterns and explanations of victimisation:

- left realism;
- feminism.

Candidates should focus on the individuals/ social groups most likely to be victims. Link these to theories and refer to work on victim surveys. The importance of victims within Government policy should be emphasised.

4. The role of agents of social control in the construction of crime and deviance

Key content and guidance notes

Social construction of crime and deviance, including the role of:

- police;
- courts;
- media.

Look at issues of power and control and how this is exercised by each institution.

Consider the role of the media and how it contributes to the social construction of crime.

Any assessment emphasises the amplification of crime and not media effects theories.

5. Solutions to the problem of crime

Key content and guidance notes

Solutions to crime, including;

- left realism;
- right realism;
- feminism.

Consider different solutions and an evaluation of each; link them to relevant theories; and exemplify each with a Government policy.

Consider concepts such as: crime prevention, retributive and restorative justice, incarceration, and rehabilitation.

Sociology of Education

In this option, candidates explore issues of power and control through a detailed study of education. The processes and outcomes associated with education are emphasised and candidates have the opportunity to reflect on their own educational experience in light of the concepts of power, control, inequality and difference. It aims to give an overview of different theoretical approaches to the study of education.

It explores the following five key issues:

1. **The structure and organisation of the education system**
2. **The role and function of education in society**
3. **Differential educational achievement**
4. **The relationship between education and the economy**
5. **Education and social policy.**

1. The structure and organisation of the education system

Key content and guidance notes

Developments in the structure and organisation of education since 1988.	This is an introduction to the topic; give an overview of educational changes since 1988. You may choose to cover the tripartite system and 1944 as a means of introducing the topic, but any assessment is focused on changes from 1988.
Different types of school and their purpose in society.	Encourage the exploration of candidates' own experience and introduce concepts such as formal, hidden curriculum, equality of opportunity, equality of outcome, competition, marketisation, and parentocracy.

2. The role and function of education in society

Key content and guidance notes

Theoretical explanations: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• functionalism;• Marxism;• social democratic;• interactionism;• new right.	This is the theoretical introduction to the topic. Candidates need to apply the theories to the context of education in the contemporary UK. Emphasise the relationship between primary and secondary socialisation, cultural reproduction, cultural capital, skills, and knowledge transmission. Evidence is needed for each theory and an evaluation of each.
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3. Differential educational achievement

Key content and guidance notes

Differential educational achievement by: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• social class;• ethnicity;• gender.	Candidates need to consider evidence of trends/patterns and explanations.
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3. Differential educational achievement (continued)

Key content and guidance notes

Theoretical explanations: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• functionalism;• Marxism;• interactionism;• social democratic;• feminism;• new right.	Focus on the theoretical explanations as well as emphasising factors that blame the home, school, economic system and teacher labelling, for differential educational achievement. Evaluation of each explanation is needed.
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The interrelationship between class, gender and ethnicity.

4. The relationship between education and the economy

Key content and guidance notes

Vocational educational and work-based training.	Candidates need to consider evidence of different types of vocational education and work-based training.
Theoretical explanations of the relationship between education and work: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• functionalism;• Marxism;• new right;• liberal/social democratic;• feminism.	Consider trends from 1988 to the present day. Evidence is needed for each theory and an evaluation of each.

5. Education and social policy

Key content and guidance notes

Government education policies from 1988 onwards.	A critique of Government educational policy since 1988 may be useful here, but assessment focuses on changes from 1988 onwards. Application of the theory to a contemporary context should be encouraged.
Theoretical explanations: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• new right;• New Labour.	An evaluation of each is needed.

Sociology of the Mass Media

In this option, candidates explore issues of power and control through a detailed study of the mass media. The core A2 themes can be explored through studying media institutions and processes, candidates are encouraged to reflect on their own experience of media consumption in the light of the concepts of power, control, inequality and differentiation. This option aims to give an overview of different theoretical approaches to the study of the media.

It explores the following five key issues:

- 1. Defining and researching the mass media**
- 2. Ownership and control of the media**
- 3. Social construction of the news**
- 4. Media representations of social groups**
- 5. The effect of the media on society.**

1. Defining and researching the mass media

Key content and guidance notes

Key concepts:

- mass media;
- determinism;
- censorship.

As an introduction to the topic, candidates need definitions and examples of different types of media.

Methods of researching the media:

- content analysis;
- semiology;
- experiments.

Look at methods of researching the media and the associated problems.

2. Ownership and control of the media

Key content and guidance notes

Trends and patterns in media ownership and control.

Theoretical explanations should differentiate between different types of Marxist explanations.

Theoretical explanations:

- Marxism;
- Neo-Marxism;
- pluralism.

An evaluation of each is needed.

3. Social construction of the news

Key content and guidance notes

Process of news construction, including the role of:

- journalists;
- editors;
- owners;
- the state.

Gatekeepers, access, and practical issues influencing the production of the news should be considered. The construction of the news links with patterns of ownership and control.

3. Social construction of the news (continued)

Key content and guidance notes

Theoretical explanations:	Knowledge of state regulation and interference in media output should be covered.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Marxism;• Neo-Marxism;• pluralism;• post-modern views.	

4. Media representations of social groups

Key content and guidance notes

Media representation of:	Evidence of the representations of each group will be sought and the explanations of this. Evidence of the representations of young and old are expected in the study of age.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• gender;• ethnicity;• age;• social class.	

Theoretical explanations:	Include an evaluation of each explanation.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Marxism;• Neo-Marxism;• pluralism;• feminism;• post-modern views.	

5. The effect of the media on society

Key content and guidance notes

Influence of the media on its audiences:	The effects of the media on its audience should be covered with reference to the groups named in key issue 4 (above).
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• direct theories;• indirect theories;• Marxism;• Neo-Marxism;• interpretivism;• post-modern views.	

Effects of the media on wider society. Theoretical explanations.	This could include consumption patterns, political views, global awareness, crime and deviance, choice, repression of groups, empowerment, eclecticism. Theoretical explanations as listed.
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Deviancy amplification theories:	Evidence of the representation of crime and deviance and the theories associated with deviancy amplification, from Marxist and interactionist perspectives, including an evaluation of each.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• moral panics.	

Sociology of Power and Politics

In this option candidates explore issues of power and control through a detailed study of political action, new social movements and theories of power. The role of ideology is emphasised as well as an exploration of where political power lies in society. It aims to give an overview of different theoretical approaches to the study of political action and new social movements.

It explores five key issues:

- 1. Defining and exploring political action in society**
- 2. Participation in, and emergence of, new social movements**
- 3. The changing patterns of political action**
- 4. Political ideologies and their relationship to political action**
- 5. The nature and distribution of political power in society.**

1. Defining and exploring political action in society

Key content and guidance notes

Different types of political action:

- political parties;
- pressure groups;
- new social movements;
- direct and indirect action;
- terrorism;
- riots;
- demonstrations and strikes;
- lobbying;
- cyber-networking.

This is an introduction to the unit. Candidates need definitions and examples of each type of political action. Emphasise the distinctions between them and their relationship to the Government.

2. Participation in, and emergence of, new social movements

Key content and guidance notes

Role within society.
Membership and participation.

Candidates need examples of new social movements and how they differentiate from old social movements.
Consider dimensions of: class, gender, age and ethnicity in terms of membership.

Theoretical explanations:

- Marxism;
- post-modern views;
- collective behaviour/identity;
- globalisation.

Theoretical explanations require evaluation.

3. The changing patterns of political action

Key content and guidance notes

Theoretical explanations of political action:

- Marxism;
- post-modern;
- feminism;
- globalisation;
- pluralism;
- collective behaviour/identity.

Base the theoretical explanations on the examples covered in key issues 1 and 2 (above).

Theoretical explanations require evaluation.

4. Political ideologies and their relationship to political action

Key content and guidance notes

Ideologies and their role in political action, such as:

- conservatism/neo-conservatism;
- liberalism;
- Marxism/Neo-Marxism;
- anarchism;
- feminism.

Each ideology should be considered and linked to types of political action associated with it.

Fundamentalism could be covered under neo-conservatism.

Assessment will not focus on any one specific ideology, it will focus on ideology in general.

5. The nature and distribution of political power in society

Key content and guidance notes

Power held by:

- the state;
- Government;
- media;
- Trans-National Corporations (TNCs);
- individuals;
- businesses.

Candidates should explore the location of power through examples of institutions, groups or individuals holding it.

Luke's three dimensions of power and Foucault's knowledge as power could be covered.

Theoretical explanations:

- Weberian;
- elite theories;
- neo-liberalist;
- pluralism;
- Marxism;
- Neo-Marxism;
- post-modern views.

An evaluation of each theoretical explanation is needed.

3.4 A2 Unit G674: *Exploring Social Inequality and Difference*

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 may carry out their own small-scale research projects as a way of enhancing a sociological understanding of methodology, substantive topic areas and core themes.

As an A-level unit, candidates are encouraged to show an understanding of the links between the nature of sociological thought, the methods of sociological enquiry and the core themes of power, social inequality, socialisation, culture and identity. Candidates are encouraged to think holistically and develop their skills of thinking as a sociologist.

1. Social inequality and difference

Key content and guidance notes

Patterns and trends of inequality and difference related to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• social class;• gender;• ethnicity;• age.	Candidates should refer to a range of evidence relating to social inequalities including those in the workplace.
Theoretical explanations of the patterns and trends: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• functionalist;• Marxist;• Neo-Marxist;• feminist;• Weberian;• post-modern views.	Theoretical explanations require evaluation.
Sociological explanations of the changing class structure.	Candidates should explore and evaluate a range of theoretical explanations of contemporary class structures.
Explanations for inequality through the intersection of: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• class;• gender;• ethnicity;• age.	Emphasise the interrelationship of the different factors.

2. Exploring sociological research into social inequality and difference

Key content and guidance notes

All concepts from Section 3.1:
AS Unit G671: *Exploring socialisation, culture and identity* 'Exploring ...' topics.

Also the following concepts:

- longitudinal studies;
- case studies;
- pilot studies;
- value freedom;
- objectivity;
- subjectivity;
- respondent validation;
- researcher imposition;
- reflexivity;
- sampling techniques:
 - random;
 - stratified;
 - quota;
 - snowball;
 - purposeful;
- target population;
- access;
- gatekeeper.

Candidates need definitions of all concepts listed. They need to understand how sociologists use them in the context of research.

Methodological issues and concerns:

- positivist;
- interpretivist;
- realist;
- feminist.

Candidates need to evaluate the research process used in studies relating to social inequality and difference, with reference to the methodology used.

4 Schemes of Assessment

4.1 AS GCE Scheme of Assessment

AS GCE Sociology (H181)

AS Unit G671: *Exploring Socialisation, Culture and Identity*

50% of the total AS GCE marks
1.5h written paper
100 marks

This question paper consists of questions based on **one** piece of pre-released data, which is a synopsis of sociological research related to the core AS themes of socialisation, culture and identity. The data includes details of the research process and/or methods used.

The pre-released data consists of approximately **two** sides of A4 and is sent to centres before the examination date.

Candidates answer **all** four of the questions.

AS Unit G672: *Topics in Socialisation, Culture and Identity*

50% of the total AS GCE marks
1.5h written paper
100 marks

This question paper has **four** sections, based on the four topic areas. Candidates are required to answer **any** two questions:

Section A: Contains **two** questions based on **family**.

Section B: Contains **two** questions based on **health**.

Section C: Contains **two** questions based on **religion**.

Section D: Contains **two** questions based on **youth**.

Candidates answer any **two** questions.

4.2 Advanced GCE Scheme of Assessment

Advanced GCE Sociology (H581)

AS units as above: Unit G671 being 25% of the total Advanced GCE marks and Unit G672 being 25% of the Advanced GCE marks.

A2 Unit G673: *Power and Control*

25% of the total
Advanced GCE marks
1.5h written paper
100 marks

This question paper has **four** sections:

Section A: Candidates are required to answer at most **two** essay questions from a choice of **three** based on **crime**.

Section B: Candidates are required to answer at most **two** essay questions from a choice of **three** based on **education**.

Section C: Candidates are required to answer at most **two** essay questions from a choice of **three** based on **mass media**.

Section D: Candidates are required to answer at most **two** essay questions from a choice of **three** based on **power and politics**.

Candidates are required to answer **two** essay questions from **one or more** of the above sections.

As an A Level unit, candidates are encouraged to show an understanding of the links between the nature of sociological thought, the methods of sociological enquiry and the core themes of power, social inequality, socialisation, culture and identity. Candidates are encouraged to think holistically and develop their skills of thinking as a sociologist.

This unit is synoptic.

A2 Unit G674: *Exploring Social Inequality and Difference*

25% of the total
Advanced GCE marks
2h written paper
100 marks

This question paper includes **one** piece of research on social inequality and difference (**not** pre-released) upon which the examination is based

Candidates answer questions (1) and (2) which are compulsory, and then either Option 1 3(a) and 3(b) or Option 2 4(a) and 4(b).

As an A Level unit, candidates are encouraged to show an understanding of the links between the nature of sociological thought, the methods of sociological enquiry and the core themes of power, social inequality, socialisation, culture and identity. Candidates are encouraged to think holistically and develop their skills of thinking as a sociologist.

This unit is synoptic.

4.3 Unit Order

The normal order in which the unit assessments could be taken is AS Units G671 and G672 in the first year of study, leading to the AS GCE award; then A2 Units G673 and G674, leading to the Advanced GCE award. However, the unit assessments may be taken in any order.

Alternatively, candidates may take a valid combination of unit assessments at the end of their AS GCE or Advanced GCE course in a 'linear' fashion.

4.4 Unit Options (at AS/A2)

There are no optional units in the AS GCE specification; for AS GCE Sociology, candidates take AS Units G671 and G672.

There are no optional units in the Advanced GCE specification; for Advanced GCE Sociology candidates take AS Units G671 and G672, *and* A2 Units G673 and G674.

4.5 Synoptic Assessment (A Level GCE)

Synoptic assessment in sociology engages candidates in theoretical debate while encouraging an active involvement with the research process. It fosters a critical awareness of contemporary social processes and change. Synoptic assessment draws together the knowledge, understanding and skills learnt in different aspects of the Advanced GCE course. It includes the explicit assessment of understanding of the connections between the nature of sociological thought; methods of sociological enquiry; and the **two** themes identified in these specifications (socialisation, culture and identity *and* social differentiation, power and stratification) using higher-order skills (a wider range and greater depth of knowledge and understanding than at AS *and* more highly developed skills of application, analysis, interpretation and evaluation than at AS). Candidates are encouraged to think holistically and develop their skills of thinking as a sociologist.

Examples of synoptic assessment tasks might include:

- an examination question that assesses a candidate's understanding of the links between sociological theories, methods and substantive topics, and which draws on the candidate's own small-scale research experiences;
- an examination question that presents candidates with a research topic that is related to the core themes and requires them to use their theoretical and methodological understanding to create and justify a research proposal;
- a stimulus question based on at least one prose passage and/or numerical data that makes connections between different parts of the course – the question would assess candidates' understanding of these connections in the context of sociological thought and research methods.

Synoptic assessment is included in both A2 units and draws on both assessment objectives.

4.6 Assessment Availability

There are **two** examination series each year, in January and June.

In 2009, only AS units will be assessed.

From 2010 both AS units and A2 units will be assessed.

4.7 Assessment Objectives

Candidates are expected to demonstrate the following in the context of the content described:

AO1 Demonstrate Knowledge and Understanding

- Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the theories, methods, concepts and various forms of evidence outlined in these specifications, and of the links between them. Communicate knowledge and understanding in a clear and effective manner.

AO2 Analysis, Evaluation and Application

- Demonstrate skills of application, analysis, interpretation and evaluation as indicated in these specifications.

AO weightings in AS GCE

Unit	% of AS GCE		Total
	AO1	AO2	
AS Unit G671: <i>Exploring Socialisation, Culture and Identity</i>	26	24	50%
AS Unit G672: <i>Topics Socialisation, Culture and Identity</i>	27	23	50%
	53%	47%	100%

AO weightings in Advanced GCE

Unit	% of Advanced GCE		Total
	AO1	AO2	
AS Unit G671: <i>Exploring Socialisation, Culture and Identity</i>	13	12	25%
AS Unit G672: <i>Topics Socialisation, Culture and Identity</i>	13	12	25%
A2 Unit G673: <i>Power and Control</i>	12	13	25%
A2 Unit G674: <i>Exploring Social Inequality and Difference</i>	11	14	25%
	49%	51%	100%

4.8 Quality of Written Communication

Quality of written communication is assessed in all units and credit may be restricted if communication is unclear.

Candidates need to:

- ensure that text is legible and that spelling, punctuation and grammar are accurate so that the meaning is clear;
- select and use a form and style of writing that is appropriate to the purpose and complex subject matter;
- organise information clearly and coherently, using specialist vocabulary when appropriate.

The quality of written communication will be awarded appropriately.

5 Technical Information

5.1 Making Unit Entries

Please note that centres must be registered with OCR in order to make any entries, including estimated entries. It is recommended that centres apply to OCR to become a registered centre well in advance of making their first entries. Centres must have made an entry for a unit in order for OCR to supply the appropriate forms.

It is essential that unit entry codes are quoted in all correspondence with OCR. See Sections 4.1 and 4.2 for these unit entry codes.

5.2 Making Qualification Entries

Candidates must enter for qualification certification separately from unit assessment(s). If a certification entry is **not** made, no overall grade can be awarded.

Candidates may enter for:

- AS GCE certification (entry code H181).
- Advanced GCE certification (entry code H581).

A candidate who has completed all the units required for the qualification may enter for certification either in the same examination series (within a specified period after publication of results) or in a later series.

AS GCE certification is available from June 2009.
Advanced GCE certification is available from June 2010.

5.3 Grading

All GCE units are awarded a-e. The Advanced Subsidiary GCE is awarded on the scale A-E. The Advanced GCE is awarded on the scale A-E with access to an A*. To be awarded an A*, candidates will need to achieve a grade A on their full A level qualification and an A* on the aggregate of their A2 units. Grades are reported on certificates. Results for candidates who fail to achieve the minimum grade (E or e) will be recorded as *unclassified* (U or u) and this is **not** certificated.

A Uniform Mark Scale (UMS) enables comparison of candidates' performance across units and across series and enables candidates' scores to be put on a common scale for aggregation purposes. The two-unit AS GCE has a total of 200 *uniform* marks and the four-unit Advanced GCE has a total of 400 *uniform* marks.

OCR converts each raw mark for each unit to a uniform mark. The maximum *uniform* mark for any unit depends on that unit's weighting in the specification. In these Sociology specifications, the four units of the Advanced GCE specification have an equal 25% UMS weighting (and the two units of the AS GCE specification have an equal 50% UMS weighting) and the UMS total for each is 100. Each unit's *raw* mark grade boundary equates to the *uniform* mark boundary at the same grade. Intermediate marks are converted on a pro-rata basis.

Uniform marks correspond to *unit* grades as follows:

(Advanced GCE) Unit Weighting	Maximum Unit Uniform Mark	Unit Grade					u
		a	b	c	d	e	
25%	100	100–80	79–70	69–60	59–50	49–40	39–0

OCR adds together the unit *uniform* marks and compares these to pre-set boundaries (see the table below) to arrive at *qualification* grades.

Total uniform marks correspond to qualification grades.

Qualification	Qualification Grade					U
	A	B	C	D	E	
AS GCE	200–160	159–140	139–120	119–100	99–80	79–0
Advanced GCE	400–320	319–280	279–240	239–200	199–160	159–0

Candidates achieving at least 320 UMS marks in their Advanced GCE, i.e. grade A, and who also gain at least 180 UMS in their two A2 units will receive an A* grade.

5.4 Result Enquiries and Appeals

Under certain circumstances, a centre may wish to query the grade available to one or more candidates or to submit an appeal against an outcome of such an enquiry. Enquiries about unit results must be made immediately following the series in which the relevant unit was taken.

For procedures relating to enquires on results and appeals, centres should consult the *OCR Administration Guide for General Qualifications* and the document *Enquiries about Results and Appeals: Information and Guidance for Centres* produced by the Joint Council. Copies of the most recent editions of these papers can be obtained from OCR.

5.5 Shelf-life of Units

Individual unit results, prior to certification of the qualification, have a shelf-life limited only by that of the qualification.

5.6 Unit and Qualification Re-sits

There is no restriction on the number of times a candidate may re-sit each unit before entering for certification for an AS GCE or Advanced GCE.

Candidates may enter for the full qualifications an unlimited number of times.

5.7 Guided Learning Hours

AS GCE Sociology requires **180** guided learning hours in total.
Advanced GCE Sociology requires **360** guided learning hours in total.

5.8 Code of Practice/Subject Criteria/Common Criteria Requirements

These specifications comply in all respects with the revised *GCSE, GCE, GNVQ and AEA Code of Practice*, as available on the QCA website; the subject criteria for GCE Sociology; and *The Statutory Regulation of External Qualifications 2004*.

5.9 Arrangements for Candidates with Particular Requirements

For candidates who are unable to complete the full assessment or whose performance may be adversely affected through no fault of their own, teachers should consult the *Access Arrangements and Special Consideration Regulations and Guidance Relating to Candidates who are Eligible for Adjustments in Examinations* produced by the Joint Council. In such cases advice should be sought from OCR as early as possible during the course.

5.10 Prohibited Qualifications and Classification Code

Candidates who enter for the OCR GCE specifications may not also enter for any other GCE specification with the certification title *Sociology* in the same examination series.

Every specification is assigned to a national classification code indicating the subject area to which it belongs.

Centres should be aware that candidates who enter for more than one GCE qualification with the same classification code will have only one grade (the highest) counted for the purpose of the Schools and College Achievement and Attainment Tables.

The classification code for these specifications is 4890.

6 Other Specification Issues

6.1 Overlap with other Qualifications

There is no significant overlap between the content of these specifications and those for other Advanced GCE qualifications.

6.2 Progression from these Qualifications

Throughout the course of study, candidates are encouraged to develop a critical awareness of sociological concepts and issues in the contemporary UK. These specifications are designed to foster the development of critical and reflective thinking with a respect for social diversity; and to encourage an awareness of the importance of social structure and social action in explaining social issues.

The specifications therefore provide a suitable foundation for the study of sociology or related courses in higher education. Equally, they are suitable for candidates intending to pursue careers or further study in social sciences, or as part of a course of general education.

6.3 Key Skills Mapping

These specifications provide opportunities for the development of the Key Skills of *Communication, Application of Number, Information Technology, Working with Others, Improving Own Learning and Performance* and *Problem Solving* at Levels 2 and/or 3. However, the extent to which this evidence fulfils the Key Skills criteria at these levels will be totally dependent on the style of teaching and learning adopted for each unit.

The following table indicates where opportunities *may* exist for at least some coverage of the various Key Skills criteria at Levels 2 and/or 3 for each unit.

Unit	C				AoN			IT			WwO			IOLP			PS		
	.1a	.1b	.2	.3	.1	.2	.3	.1	.2	.3	.1	.2	.3	.1	.2	.3	.1	.2	.3
G671	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
G672	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
G673	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
G674	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

6.4 Spiritual, Moral, Ethical, Social, Legislative, Economic and Cultural Issues

The specifications provide ample opportunity for candidates to develop and demonstrate their understanding of spiritual, moral, ethical, social, legislative, economic and cultural issues. These are all issues that are central to the discipline of sociology and provide the context within which key themes and concepts exist. In particular, candidates may develop an awareness of:

- the attitudes and values of individuals, groups, and society as a whole, and socially accepted codes of behaviour;
- issues of spiritual, moral and cultural significance to individuals, groups and society in general;
- the consequences of personal, group and societal conduct and of social change;
- ethical considerations in the context of conducting sociological research;
- the relationship between spiritual, moral, ethical, social, legislative, economic and cultural issues and contemporary social policy.

6.5 Sustainable Development, Health and Safety Considerations and European Developments

Although the specifications focus on the contemporary UK, candidates are encouraged to make use of comparative and historical examples from other societies. The impact of the European Union on social policy issues and the effects of globalisation are inherent in some of the topics available for study within the specifications.

6.6 Avoidance of Bias

OCR has taken great care in the preparation of these specifications and assessment materials to avoid bias of any kind.

6.7 Language

These specifications and associated assessment materials are in English only.

6.8 Disability Discrimination Act Information Relating to these Specifications

AS/A levels often require assessment of a broad range of competences. This is because they are general qualifications and, as such, prepare candidates for a wide range of occupations and higher level courses.

The revised AS/A level qualification and subject criteria were reviewed to identify whether any of the competences required by the subject presented a potential barrier to any disabled candidates. If this was the case, the situation was reviewed again to ensure that such competences were included only where essential to the subject. The findings of this process were discussed with disability groups and with disabled people.

Reasonable adjustments are made for disabled candidates in order to enable them to access the assessments. For this reason, very few candidates will have a complete barrier to any part of the assessment. Information on reasonable adjustments is found in *Access Arrangements and Special Consideration Regulations and Guidance Relating to Candidates who are Eligible for Adjustments in Examinations* produced by the Joint Council (refer to Section 5.9 of this specification).

Candidates who are still unable to access a significant part of the assessment, even after exploring all possibilities through reasonable adjustments, may still be able to receive an award. They would be given a grade on the parts of the assessment they have taken and there would be an indication on their certificate that not all of the competences have been addressed. This will be kept under review and may be amended in the future.

Appendix A: Performance Descriptions

Performance descriptions have been created for all GCE subjects. They describe the learning outcomes and levels of attainment likely to be demonstrated by a representative candidate performing at the A/B and E/U boundaries for AS and A2.

In practice most candidates will show uneven profiles across the attainments listed, with strengths in some areas compensating in the award process for weaknesses or omissions elsewhere. Performance descriptions illustrate expectations at the A/B and E/U boundaries of the AS and A2 as a whole; they have not been written at unit level.

Grade A/B and E/U boundaries should be set using professional judgement. The judgement should reflect the quality of candidates' work, informed by the available technical and statistical evidence. Performance descriptions are designed to assist examiners in exercising their professional judgement. They should be interpreted and applied in the context of individual specifications and their associated units. However, performance descriptions are not designed to define the content of specifications and units.

The requirement for all AS and A level specifications to assess candidates' quality of written communication will be met through one or more of the assessment objectives.

The performance descriptions have been produced by the regulatory authorities in collaboration with the awarding bodies.

AS performance descriptions for sociology

	Assessment objective 1	Assessment objective 2
Assessment objectives	<p>Knowledge and understanding of the theories, methods, concepts and various forms of evidence outlined in paragraphs 3.2 a), b) and c), and of the links between them.</p> <p>Communication of knowledge and understanding in a clear and effective manner.</p>	<p>Demonstration of skills of application, analysis, interpretation and evaluation as indicated in paragraphs 3.3 a), b) and c).</p>
A/B boundary performance descriptions	<p>Candidates characteristically:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) demonstrate accurate knowledge and understanding of a range of sociological theories, methods and concepts, supported by evidence. b) present appropriate material in a logical, accurate and coherent manner, with few errors of grammar, punctuation and spelling. 	<p>Candidates characteristically:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) demonstrate an ability to select, apply and interpret, accurately and appropriately, different types of sociological evidence from a range of sources b) make some analysis and evaluation of evidence and arguments that have relevance to the question paper.
E/U boundary performance descriptions	<p>Candidates characteristically:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) demonstrate a basic knowledge and understanding of sociological theories, methods and concepts with limited evidence b) present some sociological material with limited coherence and some errors of grammar, punctuation and spelling. 	<p>Candidates characteristically:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) demonstrate a limited ability to select, apply and interpret different types of sociological evidence b) make a limited analysis and evaluation of evidence and arguments relevant to the question paper.

A2 performance descriptions for sociology

	Assessment objective 1	Assessment objective 2
Assessment objectives	<p>Knowledge and understanding of the theories, methods, concepts and various forms of evidence outlined in paragraphs 3.2 a), b) and c), and of the links between them.</p> <p>Communication of knowledge and understanding in a clear and effective manner.</p>	<p>Demonstration of skills of application, analysis, interpretation and evaluation as indicated in paragraphs 3.3 a), b) and c).</p>
A/B boundary performance descriptions	<p>Candidates characteristically:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) demonstrate full, detailed, accurate and wide ranging knowledge and understanding of sociological theories, methods and concepts and the connections between them, citing wide ranging evidence b) present sociological material in a logical and coherent manner, where spelling, grammar and punctuation are largely accurate. 	<p>Candidates characteristically:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) demonstrate an ability to select, apply and interpret, accurately and appropriately, different types of sociological evidence from a wide range of diverse sources b) make detailed and accurate analysis and evaluation of sociological evidence and arguments on a variety of issues that are highly relevant to the question paper.
E/U boundary performance descriptions	<p>Candidates characteristically:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) demonstrate a basic knowledge and understanding of sociological theories, methods and concepts, with some limited evidence of understanding of the connections between them, supported by some evidence b) present some sociological material that displays a basic structure with limited coherence and some errors of grammar, punctuation and spelling. 	<p>Candidates characteristically:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) demonstrate a basic ability to select, apply and interpret different types of sociological evidence from a limited range of sources b) make basic analysis and evaluation of evidence and arguments that have some relevance to the question paper.

Appendix B: At a glance – A/L Sociology

At a glance – AS Sociology

Unit G671: Exploring socialisation, culture and identity (50% of AS; 25% of Advanced GCE)

This unit assesses sociological knowledge and understanding of socialisation, culture and identity in the context of sociological research.

Assessment is through one 90-minute examination comprised of a compulsory question based on **pre-released material**.

Unit G672: Topics in socialisation, culture and identity (50% of AS; 25% of Advanced GCE)

This unit offers four optional topics from which candidates must study **at least one**:

- **Family**
- **Health**
- **Religion**
- **Youth**

Assessment is through one 90-minute examination comprising two structured questions per topic. There are 8 questions in this paper and candidates must answer any two questions from any of the options.

Unit G673: Power and control (25% of Advanced GCE)

This unit offers four topics from which candidates must study **at least one**:

- **Crime and deviance**
- **Education**
- **Mass media**
- **Power and politics**

Assessment is through one 90-minute examination comprising three unstructured essay questions per topic. There are 12 questions in this paper and candidates must answer any two questions from any of the options.

All A Level unit candidates are encouraged to show an understanding of the links between the nature of sociological thought; the methods of sociological enquiry; and the core themes of power, social inequality, socialisation, culture and identity. Candidates are encouraged to think holistically and develop their skills of thinking as a sociologist.

Unit G674: Exploring social inequality and difference (25% of Advanced GCE)

This unit assesses sociological understanding of social inequality and difference in the context of sociological research.

Assessment is through one 2-hour examination based on a **piece of research (not pre-released) and an option of two routes for the essay questions**.

All A Level unit candidates are encouraged to show an understanding of the links between the nature of sociological thought, the methods of sociological enquiry and the core themes of power, social inequality, socialisation, culture and identity. Candidates are encouraged to think holistically and develop their skills of thinking as a sociologist.