



## Curriculum Intent Statement

# A-level Sociology

### Intent

#### Curriculum aims:

The study of Sociology focuses on contemporary society and fosters the development of critical and reflective thinking with a respect for social diversity. It provides an awareness of the importance of social structure and social action in explaining social issues. Students are encouraged to develop their own sociological awareness through active engagement with the contemporary social world. Students will acquire knowledge and a critical understanding of contemporary social processes and social changes; appreciate the significance of theoretical and conceptual issues in sociological debate; develop skills that enable individuals to focus on their personal identity, roles and responsibilities within society and develop a lifelong interest in social issues. A-level Sociology offers an engaging and effective introduction to Sociology. Students will learn the fundamentals of the subject and develop skills valued by higher education (HE) and employers, including critical analysis, independent thinking and research. The course is accessible to a cross-section of students, regardless of whether they have studied the subject before. Students build on skills developed in the sciences and humanities, enabling progression into a wide range of other subjects.

#### Curriculum content:

Paper 1: Education with Theory and Methods

Paper 2: Topics in Sociology: Work, Poverty and Welfare; Global Development

Paper 3: Crime and Deviance with Theory and Methods

#### Skills:

##### AO1 Knowledge and understanding

This involves demonstrating knowledge and understanding of sociological theories, concepts and evidence, and of the range of research methods and sources of information used by sociologists, and the practical, ethical and theoretical issues arising in sociological research.

##### A02 Application

This involves applying sociological theories, concepts, evidence and research methods to a range of issues.

##### A03 Analysis and evaluation

This involves things like being able to recognise and criticise sociological information, to recognise the strengths and weaknesses of sociological theories and evidence, to present information, to recognise the strengths and weaknesses of sociological theories and evidence, to present arguments, make judgements and reach conclusions based on the arguments and evidence presented.

## Implementation

The A-level sociology curriculum is delivered across a two-year linear course, with all exams taken at the end of Year 13. However, the curriculum areas covered in the first year of study are those which meet both the AS and A-level specification (to allow for rare cases where students may end up taking the AS level at another centre).

The ordering of the teaching units has been arranged in a way that allows students to develop their writing skills incrementally. For example, starting Year 12 with the *Work, Poverty and Welfare* unit (a Paper 2 unit) enables students to attempt, practise and develop their writing of 20- mark essay questions, allowing them to then tackle the 30-mark essay questions required for the *Education* unit (a Paper 1 unit). This ordering of the teaching units also allows students to build up their sociological knowledge and understanding cumulatively and maximises on opportunities for synopticity as students are able to link curriculum areas together in a way that makes sense. The learning students establish in their *Research Methods* unit for example, facilitates a much easier delivery of the *Methods in Context* curriculum contained within the *Education* unit. By the time students move on to study their final unit on *Crime and Deviance* (which not only requires students to produce 30-mark essays but also a much more sophisticated appreciation and application of complex sociological theory), students are well equipped to master the unit because of the broad understanding they have developed throughout the prior units taught.

Lessons are sequenced chronologically within each teaching unit, according to the detailed curriculum overviews provided by AQA. There are 6 teaching units altogether with each broken down into further sub-sections. All sociology classes are mixed ability and lessons tend to follow established patterns and routines which students become familiar with over time. Every lesson starts with a Mini Whiteboard task, linked to students' essential study or learning from a previous lesson. Learning is then scaffolded – starting with the minimum essential knowledge for a C grade student, gradually building up to more detailed knowledge. Activities range in difficulty, with “support” and “challenge” questions available as needed. Lessons may include paired work, whole class discussion, targeted questioning and further teacher explanation where necessary. Understanding is checked and/or solutions are provided. Lessons finish with a plenary that checks the learning aims by way of a low-stakes assessment or relevant assessment planning task.

Essential study is varied but often includes “flipped notes” (reading ahead and making notes on next lesson's topic), examination questions, or worksheets. Assessed homeworks are always essay questions.

The main teaching units are all delivered by the end of Spring Term 1 in Year 13. The remainder of Year 13 is given over to revisiting the curriculum, consolidating students' sociological understanding and fine tuning students' exam skills. This is delivered through a comprehensive scheme of revision lesson and essential study.

Opportunities for promoting and developing students' literacy are fully embedded throughout the A-level course and these are reviewed and improved on continuously. Students are well supported through the gradual approach taken towards building up their writing abilities incrementally. This has been created in consultation with the guidance and recommendations set out by the EEF in their Improving Literacy in Secondary Schools report: <https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/tools/guidance-reports/improving-literacy-in-secondary-schools/>. Some strategies for developing students literacy in sociology include using pre-writing activities, question deconstruction and interpretation tasks, writing introductions, writing good paragraphs (the sociology sandwich), writing conclusions, planning whole essays, using model essays to embed the writing process and upskilling to A/A\* essay writing.

Throughout the course students are kept abreast of sociologically relevant current affairs by their teacher. They are also provided with much opportunity for enriching and extending their sociological imaginations. Stretch opportunities are taken seriously and students are always made aware of how these link to and support the curriculum.

## Curriculum delivery:

Teaching unit	Time
1. Work, Poverty and Welfare	Year 12 autumn term
2. Research Methods	Year 12 spring term
3. Education with methods in context	Year 12 spring term
4. Global Development	Year 12 summer term
Paper 1 recap and essay practice	Year 13 autumn term
5. Theory and Methods	Year 13 autumn and spring terms
6. Crime and deviance	Year 13 autumn and spring terms
Revision, exam preparation and mock exams	Year 13 spring term
Revision, exam preparation and mock exams	Year 13 summer term

## Impact

All sociology assessments are used formatively to embed students understanding of the sociology, uncover misconceptions in their learning and, ultimately, to improve their exam skills. Students always complete sociology assessments under traditional exam style timed conditions but benefit from structured and scaffolded support which is gradually reduced throughout the course until students are planning unseen questions on the spot and writing solely from their memory. Good essay writing skills are established in Year 12 through detailed whole-class essay planning which students keep with them during assessments for reference. Students are also provided with useful prompts during their assessments e.g. for starting paragraphs, writing conclusions, signposting analysis and evaluation to the examiner etc. The amount of teacher led instruction and planning is slowly withdrawn, encouraging students to have confidence in their ability to succeed and tackle exam papers. Ultimately students will produce essays of a much higher standard when they *don't* know the question set, *aren't* following a pre-written plan and have to recall and select relevant sociological knowledge from their memory but they do need to develop good essay writing routines first. They benefit very much from having established a go-to set of principles, tips strategies for good essay writing.

Students complete practice questions in class. This is in addition to the formal quarterly assessment points. The frequency of in-class assessments is intended to improve students timing, particularly with regards to their essay but also to foster a familiarity with the pressure of writing under timed conditions in silence. By the time students enter their external exams at the end of Year 13 they will hopefully feel more comfortable in this setting and the very anxious and daunting experience of exams is made a little easier. Quarterly assessments are carried out in a more formal way and are designed to push students to apply their maximum capability in sociology at the time of each assessment. In particular for the Q2 and Q4 assessment students will complete the longest exam paper possible, according to what has been covered so far.

Students receive detailed personal feedback for all sociology assessments – this is maintained for smaller in-class assessments and essays as well as the quarterly whole-school assessments – with time given for self-evaluation and feedback learning. Time is taken to prepare and deliver thorough and impactful feedback lessons noticing what students have achieved and what areas need further instruction and support. Live marking is also frequently used, especially in Year 13 when most lessons include some low-stakes testing, to enable immediate feedback and correction.

Year 12 Assessment overview:

Units/topics	Paper	Assessed Homework	Q1 assessment	Q2 assessment	Q3 assessment	Q4 assessment
1. Work, Poverty and Welfare	Paper 2	SA1, SA2, SA3, SA4 (all essay questions)	✓	✓	✓	✓
2. Research Methods	Paper 1				✓	
3. Education	Paper 1			✓	✓	
4. Global Development	Paper 2					✓
Assessment Objectives assessed in each Sociology exam paper and assessment:			AO1: 44% AO2: 31% AO3: 25%			

Year 13 Assessment overview:

Units/topics	Paper	Assessed Homework	Q1 assessment	Q2 assessment	Q3 assessment	Q4 assessment
5. Theory and Methods	Paper 3	SA1, SA2, SA3, SA4 (all essay questions)	✓	✓	✓	Public exams
6. Crime and Deviance	Paper 3		✓	✓		
7. Revision	ALL PAPERS					
Assessment Objectives assessed in each Sociology exam paper and assessment:			AO1: 44% AO2: 31% AO3: 25%			