

GCE AS/A LEVEL



WJEC GCE AS/A LEVEL in SOCIOLOGY

ACCREDITED BY WELSH GOVERNMENT

SPECIFICATION

Teaching from 2015

For award from 2016 (AS)
For award from 2017 (A level)

Version 3 June 2020

This Welsh Government regulated qualification is not available to centres in England.

SUMMARY OF AMENDMENTS

Version	Description	Page number
2	'Making entries' section has been amended to clarify resit rules.	19
3	We have clarified that the final assessment opportunity for the 'politics' option within Unit 3 'Power and Control' is summer 2021.	2, 8, 14, 15

WJEC GCE AS and A Level in SOCIOLOGY

For teaching from 2015

For AS award from 2016

For A level award from 2017

This specification meets the GCE AS and A Level Qualification Principles which set out the requirements for all new or revised GCE specifications developed to be taught in Wales from September 2015.

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GCE AS and A LEVEL SOCIOLOGY (Wales)

SUMMARY OF ASSESSMENT

This specification is divided into a total of 4 units, 2 AS unit and 2 A2 units. Weightings noted below are expressed in terms of the full A level qualification.

AS Unit 1: Acquiring Culture
Written examination: 1 hour 15 minutes
15% of qualification 60 marks

Section A 15marks
This section comprises one structured question on the key concepts and processes of cultural transmission, socialisation and the acquisition of identity.

Section B 45 marks
This section offers a choice between two options:

- families and households
- youth cultures

Each option includes compulsory questions and a choice between two essay questions.

AS Unit 2: Understanding Society and Methods of Sociological Enquiry
Written examination: 2 hours
25% of qualification 90 marks

Section A Methods of Sociological Enquiry 35 marks
This section comprises one compulsory question. This will be based on stimulus material which will be a synopsis of a piece of sociological research.

Section B Understanding Society 55 marks
This section offers a choice between three options:

- education
- media
- religion

Each option includes compulsory questions based on data and a choice between two essay questions.

A2 Unit 3: Power and Control
Written examination: 2 hours
25% of qualification 70 marks

The questions in this section are on the theme of power. There is a choice between four options:

- crime and deviance
- health and disability
- politics (for assessment in 2021 only)
- world sociology

Each option includes compulsory questions and a choice between two essay questions.

A2 Unit 4: Social Inequality and Applied Methods of Sociological Enquiry
Written examination: 2 hours 15 minutes
35% of qualification 100 marks

Section A Applied Methods of Sociological Enquiry 40 marks
One compulsory question which will require learners to design, justify and evaluate a piece of sociological research.

Section B Social Inequality 60 marks
Questions in this section are on the theme of social differentiation and stratification. These will include a compulsory question and a choice between two essay questions.

This is a unitised specification which allows for an element of staged assessment. Assessment opportunities will be available in the summer assessment period each year, until the end of the life of the specification.

Unit 1 and Unit 2 will be available in 2016 (and each year thereafter) and the AS qualification will be awarded for the first time in summer 2016.

Unit 3 and Unit 4 will be available in 2017 (and each year thereafter) and the A level qualification will be awarded for the first time in summer 2017.

Qualification Number
listed on [The Register](#):
GCE AS: 601/5258/8
GCE A level: 601/5237/0

Qualifications Wales Approval Number
listed on [QiW](#):
GCE AS: C00/0722/3
GCE A level: C00/0722/1

GCE AS and A LEVEL SOCIOLOGY

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Aims and objectives

The study of A level Sociology must focus on contemporary society and refer to Wales where applicable. Studying sociology must foster the development of critical and reflective thinking with a respect for social diversity. It must provide an awareness of the importance of social structure and social action in explaining social issues. Learners should be encouraged to develop their own sociological awareness through active engagement with the contemporary social world and Welsh society.

The WJEC AS and A level in Sociology encourages learners 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 with reference to Wales in particular.

This specification guides teachers and learners towards the acquisition of knowledge and understanding of key sociological issues and debates. It is designed to encourage the development of higher order skills such as analysis and evaluation. Learners will be challenged to demonstrate their ability to use their sociological knowledge appropriately in the context of the demands of the questions.

The emphasis on skills makes this specification an excellent vehicle for the development of transferrable capabilities which could be utilised by the learner in both academic and professional arenas alike. Questions will allow learners to respond in non-prescriptive ways, to develop and demonstrate their "sociological imagination" through their commentary on sociological theories and evidence.

1.2 Prior learning and progression

There are no prior learning requirements. Any requirements set for entry to a course following this specification are at the discretion of centres. It is reasonable to assume that many learners will have achieved qualifications equivalent to Level 2 at KS4. Skills in Numeracy/Mathematics, Literacy/English and Information Communication Technology will provide a good basis for progression to this Level 3 qualification.

Some learners will have already gained knowledge, understanding, and skills through their study of sociology at GCSE and this specification will build on these; however, it does not exclude learners studying sociology for the first time.

This specification provides a suitable foundation for the study of sociology or a related area through a range of higher education courses, progression to the next level of vocational qualifications or employment. In addition, the specification provides a coherent, satisfying and worthwhile course of study for learners who do not progress to further study in this subject.

This specification is not age specific and, as such, provides opportunities for learners to extend their life-long learning.

1.3 Equality and fair assessment

This specification may be followed by any learner, irrespective of gender, ethnic, religious or cultural background. This specification is not age-specific and, as such, provides opportunities for candidates to extend their life-long learning. It has been designed to avoid, where possible, features that could, without justification, make it more difficult for a learner to achieve because they have a particular protected characteristic.

The protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 are age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

The specification has been discussed with groups who represent the interests of a diverse range of learners, and the specification will be kept under review.

Reasonable adjustments are made for certain learners in order to enable them to access the assessments. Information on reasonable adjustments is found in the following document from the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ): *Access Arrangements, Reasonable Adjustments and Special Consideration: General and Vocational Qualifications*. This document is available on the JCQ website (www.jcq.org.uk).

We will be following the principles set out in this document and, as a consequence of provision for reasonable adjustments, very few learners will have a complete barrier to any part of the assessment.

1.4 Welsh Baccalaureate

In following this specification, learners should be given opportunities, where appropriate, to develop the skills that are being assessed through the Core of the Welsh Baccalaureate:

- Literacy
- Numeracy
- Digital Literacy
- Critical Thinking and Problem Solving
- Planning and Organisation
- Creativity and Innovation
- Personal Effectiveness.

1.5 Welsh perspective

In following this specification, learners should be given opportunities, where appropriate, to consider a Welsh perspective if the opportunity arises naturally from the subject matter and if its inclusion would enrich learners' understanding of the world around them as citizens of Wales as well as the UK, Europe and the world.

Where there are devolved areas of government, learners will have the opportunity to study Welsh social policies in their optional areas of study.

Contrasts and comparisons between England and Wales should be explicit where data is available for study.

2 SUBJECT CONTENT

All units require the learner to demonstrate essential skills developed through their study of sociology; that is, the ability to show their knowledge and understanding of key concepts and issues in the context of sociological theory and methodology. Learners are also expected to select, interpret, apply and evaluate their knowledge and understanding in a range of theoretical and practical contexts.

The following concepts and theoretical issues will be covered across the specification:

- social order, social control
- social change
- conflict and consensus
- social structure and social action
- the role of values
- the relationship between sociology issues and contemporary social policy.

Learners will also demonstrate knowledge and understanding of methods of sociological enquiry and the relationship between theory and methods. They will also be expected to apply and evaluate this knowledge and understanding to a range of related methodological issues.

Learners will study concepts and theoretical issues through two themes:

- socialisation, culture and identity
- social differentiation, power and stratification.

These themes will be covered across all units although there will be greater emphasis on the first theme in the AS units and on the second theme in the A2 units.

These themes must be understood and applied to particular substantive areas of sociology in contemporary society; Wales and UK and in a global context where appropriate. The themes will be interpreted as threads running through the compulsory and optional areas of the specification. For this reason they should not be regarded as discrete topics; for example, the theme of socialisation, culture and identity might be addressed through aspects of family but equally through aspects of the media or youth activities. Similarly the theme of social differentiation, power and stratification might be addressed through the study of education but equally through the study of politics (to summer 2021 only) or world sociology.

At AS and A2 learners will be expected to demonstrate:

- a wide range and depth of knowledge and understanding
- skills of application, analysis, interpretation and evaluation

At A2 there is a greater emphasis on the higher level skills of application, analysis, interpretation and evaluation.

Through the subject content learners will be provided with opportunities to develop these skills.

2.1 AS UNITS

Unit 1: Acquiring Culture

Written examination: 1 hour 15 minutes

15% of A level qualification (37.5% of AS qualification)

This unit focuses on the theme of socialisation, identity and culture and is divided into two sections.

Section A of the unit is compulsory and focuses on the key concepts and processes of cultural transmission, including socialisation and the acquisition of identity.

Learners will be expected to develop a depth of knowledge and understanding of the subject content and an ability to analyse and apply this knowledge with reference to Welsh examples where applicable.

Section A

Content	Amplification
The social construction of culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Definition of culture as a way of life and of terms such as norms, values, beliefs, roles, status • Aspects of culture such as dress, language, food, music and heritage • Meaning of the social construction of culture such as feral children, social change and the nature/nurture debate • Cultural diversity and sub-cultures with reference to Welsh examples where applicable
The process and agencies of socialisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The process of primary and secondary socialisation through role models, imitation, sanctions and processes linked to specific agencies of socialisation • The process of cultural transmission through primary socialisation – families • The process of cultural transmission through secondary socialisation – peers, education, religion, the media and work • Formal/informal social control
Examples of the influence of socialisation on identity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identity: personal and social • Gender • Class • Ethnicity • Nationality and Welsh identity

Section B develops understanding of the key concepts and processes of socialisation and culture through detailed study of one of two options:

- families and households
- youth cultures.

Learners will be expected to develop a depth of knowledge and understanding of the subject content and an ability to analyse, apply and evaluate sociological theories and evidence.

Section B

Option	Amplification
Families and households	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family forms and diversity in England and Wales • Demographic changes including marriage, divorce, co-habitation, life expectancy, fertility, singlehood in England and Wales • Relationships in families and households with reference to social change • Theoretical perspectives of families and households: functionalist, Marxist, feminist, postmodernist, New Right
Youth cultures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Factors influencing the formation of youth cultures in England and Wales including the media, economic changes, globalisation and the impact of class, gender, ethnicity and nationality • The changing nature of youth culture and the growth of neo tribes in England and Wales • Youth subcultures, deviance, with reference to delinquency, crime, education and media • Theoretical perspectives of youth cultures: functionalist, Marxist, feminist, postmodernist, interactionist

Unit 2: Understanding Society and Methods of Sociological Enquiry

Written examination: 2 hours

25% of A level qualification (62.5% of AS qualification)

Unit 2 focuses on the themes of socialisation, identity and culture and methods of sociological enquiry and is divided into two sections.

Section A of the unit is compulsory and focuses on methods of sociological enquiry. Learners will be required to develop a knowledge and understanding of sociological concepts and key methodological issues and to use examples from contemporary sociological research with reference to Welsh examples where applicable to demonstrate this knowledge and understanding.

Section A

Content	Amplification
Key concepts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • validity • ethics • reliability • generalisability • representativeness • objectivity
Primary quantitative and qualitative research methods with reference to Welsh examples where applicable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • questionnaires • interviews • focus groups • observational methods
Methodological approaches to research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • survey • ethnographic methods • longitudinal studies • methodological pluralism and also triangulation
Secondary methods and data with reference to Welsh examples where applicable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • existing sociological research • official statistics such as WG (Welsh government) data sets • documents such as: letters, diaries and newspaper reports
Sampling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • representative samples <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – sampling frame – simple random – stratified random – systematic random – quota • non representative sampling <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – snowball – volunteer – purposive and opportunity samples • target population <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – gatekeeper – access

Content	Amplification
Ethical issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • deception • sensitivity • confidentiality • informed consent and vulnerability • anonymity / privacy • the right to withdraw • protection from harm for both the researcher and the sample being studied
Practical issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • operationalization • choice of research topic and target population • access • time • cost
Theories of research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • positivist • interpretivist • realism

Section B of the unit develops understanding of the key themes of socialisation culture and identity. This section of the unit also includes consideration of the themes of differentiation, power and stratification through detailed study of one of three options:

- education
- media
- religion.

Learners will be expected to develop an in depth of knowledge and understanding of the subject content and an ability to analyse, apply and evaluate sociological theories and evidence with reference to Welsh examples where applicable.

Section B

Option	Amplification
Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The role and function of education in contemporary society • Patterns and trends of differential attainment and participation with reference to social class, gender and ethnicity • Contemporary social policy with regard to education in society in England and Wales • The influence of material factors, cultural factors and processes such as labelling within the education system and in wider society on patterns and trends in educational attainment in England and Wales • Theoretical perspectives of education: functionalist, Marxist, interactionist, feminist, New Right, postmodernist

<p>Media</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The role of the media in contemporary society including the effect of the media on audiences, the way that audiences use the media, moral panics, new media and globalisation and models of media effects • Ownership and control of the media including the role of media professionals, news values, the content of the media, newsworthiness and agenda setting • Patterns and trends in the representation of social groups with reference to social class, gender, ethnicity, age and disability and nationality • Contemporary social policy with regard to media in Wales and England • Theoretical perspectives of the media: functionalist, Marxist, neo-Marxist, feminist, postmodernist, pluralist
<p>Religion</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The role and function of religion in contemporary society, with reference to Wales where applicable • Patterns and trends of participation and religiosity with reference to social class, gender, ethnicity and age in England and Wales • Religious structures and organisations including churches, denominations, new-age movements, new religious movements, fundamentalism and secularisation in England and Wales • Contemporary social policy with regard to religion in society in England and Wales • Theoretical perspectives of religion: Functionalist, Marxist, neo-Marxist, feminist, Weberian, postmodernist.

2.2 A2 UNITS

Unit 3: Power and Control

Written examination: 2 hours

25% of qualification

This unit focuses on the themes of power, differentiation and stratification with issues relating to social order and social control studied through one of the following options:

- crime and deviance
- health and disability
- politics (for assessment in 2021 only)
- world sociology

Learners will be required to develop knowledge and understanding of the subject content and an ability to apply, analyse and evaluate sociological theories and evidence with reference to Welsh examples where applicable.

Option	Amplification
Crime and deviance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • patterns of the social distribution of crime and deviance related to social class, gender, ethnicity and age in England and Wales • measuring crime; official government statistics including police statistics and the British Crime Survey, victim studies and self-report studies and the impact of contemporary social policies on crime rates in England and Wales • definitions of crime and deviance as social constructs including the role of the media • the influence of theories and explanations on social policy • theories and explanations of crime and deviance: functionalist, Marxist, neo-Marxist, interactionist, right and left realism, postmodernist, feminist, sub-cultural
Health and disability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • official statistics and patterns and trends of the social distribution of health and illness related to social class, gender, ethnicity and age • explanations for patterns and trends in the distribution of health and illness including artefact, self-selection, cultural, material and inequalities in access to and provision of health care in England and Wales • definitions and the social construction of health, illness and disability; medicalisation, the role of health professionals and the impact of health policies on their role • the impact of social policies on the health of the nation with reference to England and Wales • theories and explanations of health and disability: functionalist, Marxist, interactionist, feminist, postmodernist, biomedical model

<p>Politics¹ (for assessment in summer 2021 only)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • patterns and trends in the social distribution of political participation related to social class, gender, ethnicity, nation and age • explanations of the distribution of political participation including partisan de-alignment, class, gender, age, nation and ethnicity • the role of political organisations including pressure groups, parties and their policies, new social movements, anti-capitalist and anti-globalisation movements in policy making and the democratic process with reference to Wales and devolution debates where applicable • theories and explanations of power and politics: functionalist, Marxist, neo-Marxist, postmodernist, Weberian, pluralist, elite theories
<p>World sociology</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • patterns of inequality related to health, education, employment, poverty in England and Wales and the world • explanations for patterns of inequality including population, urbanisation, marginalisation, aid, debt and relevant policies, dependency, feminist explanations • the impact of globalisation, transnational corporations, world trade, non-governmental organisations on world policy in relation to development issues. • theories and explanations of development: Marxist, modernisation, dependency, world systems theory

¹ The 'politics' option is assessed for the final time in summer 2021. This option will not be available from the summer 2022 exams series onwards.

Unit 4: Social Inequality and Applied Methods of Sociological Enquiry

Written examination: 2 hours 15 minutes

35% of qualification

This unit focuses on the themes of social differentiation, power and stratification and on the application of knowledge and understanding of methods of sociological enquiry. The emphasis will be on effective demonstration of knowledge and high level skills of analysis, interpretation and evaluation.

Section A focuses on the processes of research design and on the application of knowledge and understanding of methods of sociological enquiry previously studied in unit 2.

Learners will be required to use their knowledge and understanding of research methods to demonstrate the higher order skills of designing analysing, justifying and evaluating their own research proposal.

Section A

Content	Amplification
Research design	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Operationalisation• Selection of chosen method with justification and identification of potential problems and their impact• Selection of sample using sampling technique with justification and identification of problems and their impact• Ethical issues• Practical issues• Methods of presenting collected data.

Section B focuses on the themes of social differentiation, power and stratification. Learners are required to use empirical evidence, statistical data and examples drawn from Wales where applicable, to demonstrate inequality and to evaluate the usefulness of sociological theories in explaining these inequalities.

Section B

Content	Amplification
Evidence and examples of areas of inequality related to social class, gender, ethnicity and age in contemporary society with reference to Wales where data is available	Evidence and examples may be drawn from areas studied across the specification for example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family and households • Youth culture • Education • Religion • Media • Crime and deviance • Health and disability • Power • World sociology • Work and pay • Distribution of wealth and income
Theories and explanations for inequality and stratification related to social class, gender, ethnicity, age and nation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Functionalist • Marxist and neo-Marxist • Weberian and neo-Weberian • Feminist • Postmodernist • New Right Theories

3 ASSESSMENT

3.1 Assessment objectives and weightings

Below are the assessment objectives for this specification. Learners must demonstrate their ability to:

AO1

Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of:

- sociological theories, concepts and evidence
- sociological research methods

AO2

Apply sociological theories, concepts, evidence and research methods to a range of issues

AO3

Analyse and evaluate sociological theories, concepts, evidence and research methods in order to:

- present arguments
- make judgements
- draw conclusions

Assessment objective weightings are shown below as a percentage of the full A level, with AS weightings in brackets.

Unit	Unit Weighting	AO1	AO2	AO3
AS Unit 1	15% (37.5%)	8% (20%)	4% (10%)	3% (7.5%)
AS Unit 2	25% (62.5%)	13% (33%)	7% (17%)	5% (12.5%)
A2 Unit 3	25%	11%	9%	5%
A2 Unit 4	35%	12%	13%	10%
Total	100%	44%	33%	23%

4 TECHNICAL INFORMATION

4.1 Making entries

This is a unitised specification which allows for an element of staged assessment.

Assessment opportunities will be available in the summer assessment period each year, until the end of the life of the specification.

Unit 1 and Unit 2 will be available in 2016 (and each year thereafter) and the AS qualification will be awarded for the first time in summer 2016.

Unit 3 and Unit 4 will be available in 2017 (and each year thereafter) and the A level qualification will be awarded for the first time in summer 2017.

A qualification may be taken more than once. However, if any unit has been attempted twice and a candidate wishes to enter the unit for the third time, then the candidate will have to re-enter all units and the appropriate cash-in(s). This is referred to as a 'fresh start'. When retaking a qualification (fresh start), a candidate may have up to two attempts at each unit. However, no results from units taken prior to the fresh start can be used in aggregating the new grade(s).

If a candidate has been entered for but is absent for a unit, the absence does not count as an attempt. The candidate would, however, qualify as a resit candidate.

The entry codes appear below.

	Title	Entry codes	
		English-medium	Welsh-medium
AS Unit 1	Acquiring Culture	2200U1	2200N1
AS Unit 2	Understanding Society and Methods of Sociological Enquiry	2200U2	2200N2
A2 Unit 3	Power and Control	1200U3	1200N3
A2 Unit 4	Social Inequality and Applied Methods of Sociological Enquiry	1200U4	1200N4
AS Qualification cash-in		2200QS	2200CS
A level Qualification cash-in		1200QS	1200CS

The current edition of our *Entry Procedures and Coding Information* gives up-to-date entry procedures.

There is no restriction on entry for this specification with any other WJEC AS or A level specification.

4.2 Grading, awarding and reporting

The overall grades for the GCE AS qualification will be recorded as a grade on a scale A to E. The overall grades for the GCE A level qualification will be recorded as a grade on a scale A* to E. Results not attaining the minimum standard for the award will be reported as U (unclassified). Unit grades will be reported as a lower case letter a to e on results slips but not on certificates.

The Uniform Mark Scale (UMS) is used in unitised specifications as a device for reporting, recording and aggregating candidates' unit assessment outcomes. The UMS is used so that candidates who achieve the same standard will have the same uniform mark, irrespective of when the unit was taken. Individual unit results and the overall subject award will be expressed as a uniform mark on a scale common to all GCE qualifications. An AS GCE has a total of 200 uniform marks and an A level GCE has a total of 500 uniform marks. The maximum uniform mark for any unit depends on that unit's weighting in the specification.

Uniform marks correspond to unit grades as follows:

Unit Weightings	Maximum unit uniform mark	Unit grade				
		a	b	c	d	e
Unit 1 (15%)	75	60	53	45	38	30
Unit 2 (25%)	125	100	88	75	63	50
Unit 3 (25%)	125	100	88	75	63	50
Unit 4 (35%)	175	140	123	105	88	70

The uniform marks obtained for each unit are added up and the subject grade is based on this total.

	Maximum uniform marks	Qualification grade				
		A	B	C	D	E
GCE AS	200	160	140	120	100	80
GCE A level	500	400	350	300	250	200

At A level, Grade A* will be awarded to candidates who have achieved a Grade A (400 uniform marks) in the overall A level qualification and at least 90% of the total uniform marks for the A2 units (270 uniform marks).