



Qualifications and  
Curriculum Authority



Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru  
Welsh Assembly Government



*Rewarding Learning*

# GCSE subject criteria for sociology

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## Introduction

1. GCSE subject criteria set out the knowledge, understanding, skills and assessment objectives common to all GCSE specifications in sociology. They provide the framework within which an awarding body creates the detail of the specification.
2. Specifications must also meet the regulators' general requirements, including the common and GCSE criteria as defined in *The statutory regulation of external qualifications* (QCA/04/1293).
3. Subject criteria are intended to:
  - help ensure consistent and comparable standards in the same subject across the awarding bodies
  - ensure that the rigour of GCSE is maintained
  - ensure that specifications build on the knowledge, understanding and skills established by the national curricula for England, Northern Ireland and Wales, and facilitate progression to higher level general or vocational qualifications in sociology or related sectors of employment and training
  - help higher education institutions, employers and other stakeholders such as learners and parents/guardians know what has been studied and assessed.
4. Any GCSE specification that contains significant elements of sociology must be consistent with the relevant parts of these subject criteria.

## Aims and learning outcomes

5. GCSE specifications in sociology should encourage learners to be inspired, moved and changed by following a broad, coherent, satisfying and worthwhile course of study and to reflect on their own experience of the social world to enhance their ability to play informed roles within different social contexts. They should prepare learners to make informed decisions about further learning opportunities and career choices.
6. GCSE specifications in sociology must enable learners to:
  - recognise that their sociological knowledge, understanding and skills help them to develop an understanding of the interrelationships between individuals, groups, institutions and societies

- analyse critically the nature and sources of information and to base reasoned judgements and arguments on evidence
- organise and communicate their knowledge and understanding in different and creative ways, and reach substantiated judgements.

## **Subject content**

7. The content of GCSE specifications in sociology must reflect the learning outcomes.
8. GCSE specifications in sociology must require learners to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of:
  - social structures and social differentiation in contemporary society
  - social processes, including socialisation, culture and identity, social control, social interaction and social change
  - social issues, including the causes and consequences of inequality, and the sources, distribution and exercise of power and authority
  - the relationships between individuals, groups, institutions and societies, and the range of influences that act upon each of them.
9. GCSE specifications in sociology must require learners to develop the ability to:
  - acquire information for different purposes using a range of sources and methods
  - interpret and evaluate information presented in different forms
  - use information to examine issues and construct and evaluate arguments and conclusions.

## Assessment objectives

10. All specifications in sociology must require candidates to demonstrate their ability to:

Assessment objectives		% weighting
AO1	Recall, select and communicate their knowledge and understanding of social structures, processes and issues	30–40
AO2	Apply knowledge and understanding in a range of contexts both familiar and unfamiliar	30–40
AO3	Select, interpret, analyse and evaluate information from different sources	20–30

## Scheme of assessment

11. GCSE specifications in sociology must allocate 100% of the weighting to external assessment in the overall scheme of assessment

12. Question papers must be targeted at the full range of GCSE grades.

## Grade descriptions

13. Grade descriptions are provided to give a general indication of the standards of achievement likely to have been shown by candidates awarded particular grades. The descriptions must be interpreted in relation to the content in the specification; they are not designed to define that content.

14. The grade awarded will depend in practice upon the extent to which the candidate has met the assessment objectives overall. Shortcomings in some aspects of candidates' performance in the assessment may be balanced by better performances in others.

Grade	Description
A	<p>Candidates recall, select and communicate detailed knowledge and thorough understanding of relevant social structures, processes and issues.</p> <p>They apply relevant concepts, terms and theories effectively in a range of contexts. They recognise issues and debates and deploy relevant evidence to reach valid conclusions. They analyse links between structures, processes and issues to produce grounded analyses.</p> <p>They identify, explain and evaluate the use of a range of appropriate methods, sources, information and data to address a question or issue. They interpret information and data presented in a variety of forms, critically evaluate its relevance in relation to the arguments, and reach substantiated conclusions. They use concepts, terminology and conventions accurately and appropriately.</p>
C	<p>Candidates recall, select and communicate sound knowledge and understanding of different social structures, processes and issues.</p> <p>They apply appropriate concepts, terms and theories in a range of contexts. They analyse, in a limited way, the structures, processes and issues mentioned in the specification. They recognise and describe relevant issues, making reference to appropriate arguments and evidence. They make straightforward links between structures, processes and issues.</p> <p>They identify and explain, in a limited way, the use of methods, sources, information and data to address a question or issue. They deploy a range of information and data as evidence for conclusions.</p>

F	<p>Candidates recall, select and communicate basic knowledge and understanding of some aspects of social structures, processes, and issues.</p> <p>They identify and explain in a simple, limited and uncritical way the use of methods, sources, information and data to address a question or issue.</p> <p>They identify evidence and relate it in a simple way to arguments. They present simple conclusions that are sometimes supported by evidence.</p>
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