

OxfordAQA

International AS/A-level

Sociology (9690)

Switching guide

Switching from Cambridge International Examinations to OxfordAQA Examinations

For this new International GCSE Sociology specification, OxfordAQA has designed an engaging and effective introduction to sociology. Students will learn the fundamentals of the subject and learn to understand their own societies and those of other people. They will also develop skills valued by higher education (HE) and employers, including critical analysis and independent thinking.

Our aim with this specification is to make this important subject accessible to young people around the world. The specification builds on the OxfordAQA International GCSE, but it is not necessary to have studied a GCSE in Sociology to study this AS/A-level specification. In order to make the subject engaging and accessible, we have included some study of the foundations of the discipline set down by sociologists in the past, but have also taken account of recent developments, evidence and examples which will help students to grasp the complexities of social life and social changes.

We have also created opportunities for students to apply what they learn in sociology to their own lives and to their own societies or societies they know about. We hope that students will be enthused by what they learn and inspired to study the subject at a higher level.

Summary of differences

Specification Content

- OxfordAQA includes a mixture of familiar and newer A-level themes and topics, such as *People & Development*, *People & the Environment*, and *People & Technology* which focus on issues such as globalisation, climate change, technology, and environmental sociology
- Cambridge includes some focus on these themes, particularly globalisation, though follows a more traditional sociology structure, adding *Education*, *Media*, and *Religion*.
- OxfordAQA explicitly requires students to apply examples from “their own society or a society they know about”, emphasising application of sociology to their everyday lives.

Assessment Structure

- OxfordAQA is modular, with AS units (1 & 2) and A2 units (3, 4, 5) taken separately or together AS contributes 40% of the A-level. Cambridge can be linear or staged, but all A-level components must be completed for the full award AS contributes 50% of the A-level.
- OxfordAQA AS assessments mix short-answer, structured data questions, and extended responses, especially in AS Unit 1. At A-level, both OxfordAQA and Cambridge assessments are more essay-driven, with particularly in Paper 4 (Cambridge) and Units 3-5, OxfordAQA.
- Assessment Objective weightings are broadly similar, with Cambridge placing a slightly higher emphasis on AO3 (analysis & evaluation) at A Level, rising to 35–43% depending on the paper.

OxfordAQA specification (9690)	Cambridge International Examinations specification (9699)
Overall structure	
<p>At AS level (Units 1 and 2), students study compulsory topics in Families, Socialisation and Social Control, along with research methods and theory.</p> <p>At A2 (Units 3-5) students study 3 compulsory topics.</p>	<p>At AS level (Papers 1 and 2), students study compulsory topics in Socialisation, Identity and The Family, along with methods of research.</p> <p>At A2 (Papers 3 and 4) students study a compulsory topic in Education and then choose two from a group of three optional topics.</p>
<p>Unit 1: Introducing Sociology Students will answer questions on families and research methods.</p> <p>Unit 2: Exploring Sociology Students will answer questions on socialisation and social control and research methods and theory.</p> <p>Unit 3: People and development</p> <p>Unit 4: People and the environment</p> <p>Unit 5: People and technology</p>	<p>Paper 1: Socialisation, Identity and Methods of Research</p> <p>Paper 2: The Family</p> <p>Paper 3: Education</p> <p>Paper 4: Globalisation, Media and Religion Students answer questions on two from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Section A: Globalisation •Section B: Media •Section C: Religion

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Paper-by-paper breakdown	
<p>Assessment overview AS Two externally assessed written examinations.</p> <p>Unit 1: Introducing Sociology Written exam: 1 hour 45 minutes, 60 marks, 50% of AS, 20% of A-level</p> <p><i>Section A – Families (40 marks)</i> Compulsory short and 1 x extended response questions.</p> <p><i>Section B - Research methods (20 marks)</i> Compulsory short questions and a structured question based on data about an unseen issue of global sociological significance.</p> <p>Unit 2: Exploring Sociology Written exam: 1 hour 45 minutes, 60 marks, 50% of AS, 20% of A-level</p> <p><i>Section A - Socialisation and social control (40 marks)</i> Compulsory short and 1 x extended response questions.</p> <p><i>Section B - Research methods and theory (20 marks)</i> 1 x compulsory extended response question.</p>	<p>Assessment overview AS Two externally assessed written examinations.</p> <p>Paper 1: Socialisation, Identity and Methods of Research Written exam: 1 hour 30 minutes, 60 marks, 20% of AS, 25% of A-level</p> <p><i>Section A (34 marks)</i> 3x compulsory questions, with questions 2 and 3 each comprised of two parts.</p> <p><i>Section B (26 marks)</i> 1x essay from a choice of two.</p> <p>Paper 2: The Family Written exam: 1 hour 30 minutes, 60 marks, 20% of AS, 25% of A-level</p> <p><i>Section A (34 marks)</i> 3x compulsory questions, with questions 2 and 3 each comprised of two parts.</p> <p><i>Section B (26 marks)</i> 1x essay from a choice of two.</p>

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Paper-by-paper breakdown	
<p>A2 Three externally assessed written examinations.</p> <p>Unit 3: People and development Written exam: 1 hour 30 minutes, 50 marks, 20% of A-level</p> <p>2 x compulsory short and 2 x compulsory extended response questions.</p> <p>Unit 4: People and the environment Written exam: 1 hour 30 minutes, 50 marks, 20% of A-level.</p> <p>2 x compulsory short and 2 x compulsory extended response questions.</p> <p>Unit 5: People and technology Written exam: 1 hour 30 minutes, 50 marks, 20% of A-level.</p> <p>2 x compulsory short and 2 x compulsory extended response questions.</p>	<p>A2 Two externally assessed written examinations.</p> <p>Paper 3: Education Written exam: 1 hour 30 minutes, 50 marks, 20% of A-level</p> <p>Candidates answer four compulsory questions. Question 4 is an essay (26 marks).</p> <p>Paper 4: Globalisation, Media and Religion Written exam: 1 hour 45 minutes, 70 marks, 30% of A-level.</p> <p>There are six essay questions, two in each section. Candidates should answer two questions, selecting select one question from two different sections: Section A: Globalisation Section B: Media Section C: Religion Each question is worth 35 marks.</p>

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Assessment Objectives	
<p>AO1 (AS - 42%; A-level - 38%) Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of sociological theories, concepts and evidence.</p> <p>AO2 (AS - 24%; A-level 27.5%) Interpret sociological evidence and data and apply sociological theories, concepts, evidence and research methods to a range of issues.</p> <p>AO3 (AS – 34%; A-level 34.5%) Analyse and evaluate sociological theories, concepts, evidence and research methods in order to present arguments, make judgements and draw conclusions.</p>	<p>AO1 Knowledge and understanding (AS - 40%; A-level - 35%) Demonstrating knowledge and understanding of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • sociological concepts, theories, evidence, views, research methods, arguments and debates • the theoretical and practical considerations that influence the design and execution of sociological research • relevant sociological research findings. <p>AO2 Interpretation and application (AS - 30%; A-level - 30%) Interpreting sociological material, including concepts, theories and evidence, and applying this to a range of issues. This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • using relevant sociological material to support points or develop arguments • explaining how sociological material is applicable to a particular issue or question • demonstrating awareness of the links between the concepts, theories and evidence used to support points or develop arguments. <p>AO3 Analysis and evaluation (AS - 30%; A-level - 30%) Analysing and evaluating sociological theories, evidence, views, research methods, and arguments. This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • explaining the strengths and limitations of sociological theories, views and research methods • developing arguments against sociological theories and views • investigating sociological theories and arguments to reveal underlying assumptions, value judgements, misconceptions, logical flaws and ideological influences • discussing counter viewpoints or evidence to demonstrate the complexity of sociological issues and debates • recognising the limitations of, or bias in, sociological and non-sociological evidence • reaching conclusions based on a reasoned consideration of available evidence and arguments.

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Topic by topic comparison	
3.1.1 Families	
3.1.1.1 Families, marriage and kinship	There is some overlap between the OxfordAQA and Cambridge specifications, though there are differences in language and emphasis due to the differences in the ways the content is arranged for in both specs for this topic area.
3.1.1.2 Perspectives on families and the relationship between families and society	Broadly similar content covered in sections 3.1 and 4.1 of the Cambridge specification.
3.1.1.3 Social change and changing families	Broadly similar content covered in section 3.2 of the Cambridge specification. Certain parts of the OxfordAQA content are not explicitly mentioned in the Cambridge specification. For example: Individualisation; personal life (Smart). Diasporas and transnational families. Friends as family. Pets/ companion animals as family members.
3.1.1.4 Gender, age and the experience of family life	Broadly similar content covered in sections 4.1 and 4.2 of the Cambridge specification.
Note: The OxfordAQA specification suggests that in their study of section 3.1.1, students would benefit from studying the work of the following sociologists: Engels, Oakley, Parsons, Smart, Stacey and Therborn.	These sociological theorists are not explicitly named in the Cambridge specification.

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Topic by topic comparison	
3.1.2 Socialisation and social control	
3.1.2.1 Individuals and society	There is some overlap between the OxfordAQA specification and section 1.1 of the Cambridge specification, though there are differences in language and emphasis due to the differences in the ways the content is arranged for in both specs for this topic. For example, the Cambridge specification does not explicitly mention the Mills and the Sociological imagination.
3.1.2.2 Socialisation	There is some overlap between the OxfordAQA specification and section 1.1 and 1.2 of the Cambridge specification, though there are differences in language and emphasis due to the differences in the ways the content is arranged for in both specs for this topic. For example, the Cambridge specification does not explicitly mention: Primary and secondary socialisation; re-socialisation; inadequate socialisation. Sociological perspectives on socialisation: functionalist; Marxist; feminist; social action/interactionist.
3.1.2.3 Social identities and social change	There is some overlap between the OxfordAQA specification and section 1.3 of the Cambridge specification, though there are differences in language and emphasis due to the differences in the ways the content is arranged for in both specs for this topic. For example, the Cambridge specification does not explicitly mention: Social identities based on age and generation/cohort; sex and gender; race and ethnicity; social class; religion; ability/disability; nationality. Social change and identities: gender identities including masculinity and femininity

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Topic by topic comparison	
3.1.2.4 Social control	There is some overlap between the OxfordAQA specification and sections 1.1 and 1.2 of the Cambridge specification. However, this topic area of the OxfordAQA specification places greater emphasis on crime, state control and different sociological perspectives on social control, which are not explicitly mentioned in the Cambridge specification.
3.1.2.5 Deviance, harm and crime	This topic point is not explicitly addressed in the Cambridge specification
The OxfordAQA specification suggests that in their study of section 3.1.2, students would benefit from studying the work of the following sociologists: Stanley Cohen, Fanon, Goffman, Mead, Mills and Zuboff.	These sociological theorists are not explicitly named in the Cambridge specification.

3.1.3 Research methods and theory	
3.1.3.1 Approaches to research	Broadly similar content covered in sections 2.1 and 2.2 of the Cambridge specification.
3.1.3.2 Main research methods and their strengths and limitations	Broadly similar content covered in sections 2.1 and 2.2 of the Cambridge specification.
3.1.3.3 Issues in research	There is some overlap between the OxfordAQA specification and section 2.3 of the Cambridge specification, though there are differences in language and emphasis due to the differences in the ways the content is arranged for in both specs for this topic area.
3.1.3.4 Interpretation of data	Broadly similar content covered in section 2.1 of the Cambridge specification.
3.1.3.5 Sociological theories and perspectives	This is not explicitly addressed in the Cambridge specification.
3.2.1 People and development	
3.2.1.1 The great divide	<p>There is some overlap between the OxfordAQA specification and sections 7.1, 7.2 and 8.1 of the Cambridge specification, though there are differences in language and emphasis due to the differences in the ways the content is arranged for in both specs for this topic area, particularly in relation to imperialism, colonialism and enslavement.</p> <p>The following content is not explicitly addressed in the Cambridge specification:</p> <p>Industrialisation and urbanisation; the 'great transformation' (Polanyi).</p> <p>Arguments for and against reparations for slavery and colonialism.</p>

<p>3.2.1.2 What is meant by globalisation?</p>	<p>Broadly similar content covered in sections 7.1 and 7.2 of the Cambridge specification.</p>
<p>3.2.1.3 Who is involved in globalisation?</p>	<p>Broadly similar content covered in sections 7.3 and 8.1 of the Cambridge specification.</p>
<p>3.2.1.4 Demographic changes – migration and diasporas</p>	<p>There is some overlap between the OxfordAQA specification and section 8.2 of the Cambridge specification, though there are differences in language and emphasis due to the differences in the ways the content is arranged for in both specs for this topic area,</p> <p>The following content is not explicitly addressed in the Cambridge specification:</p> <p>Growth and development of diasporas and transnational networks.</p> <p>Effects on migration of climate change.</p>
<p>3.2.1.5 Obstacles to progress</p>	<p>There is some overlap between the OxfordAQA specification and section 7.1 and 8.1 of the Cambridge specification, though there are differences in language and emphasis due to the differences in the ways the content is arranged for in both specs for this topic area,</p> <p>The following content is not explicitly addressed in the Cambridge specification:</p> <p>The role of globalisation in the climate crisis and environmental problems; sustainable development.</p> <p>Wars and conflicts: effects of these on development.</p>
<p>The OxfordAQA specification suggests that in their study of section 3.2.1, students would benefit from studying the work of the following sociologists: Bello, Braudel, Frank, Polanyi, Rodney, Sachs.</p>	<p>These sociological theorists are not explicitly named in the Cambridge specification.</p>
<p>3.2.2 People and the environment</p>	

3.2.2.1 The built human environment	This is not explicitly addressed in the Cambridge specification.
3.2.2.2 Human impacts on the environment	This is not explicitly addressed in the Cambridge specification.
3.2.2.3 People and animals	This is not explicitly addressed in the Cambridge specification.
The OxfordAQA specification suggests that in their study of section 3.2.2, students would benefit from studying the work of the following sociologists: Augé, Brand, Bryant; Bullard; (Mike) Davis, Hannigan.	These sociological theorists are not explicitly named in the Cambridge specification.
3.2.3 People and technology	
3.2.3.1 pre-and non-digital technologies	This is not explicitly addressed in the Cambridge specification.
3.2.3.2 'Traditional' media	Broadly similar content covered in section 9.1-9.3 of the Cambridge specification.
3.2.3.3 The internet and social and new media	Broadly similar content covered in section 9.1-9.3 of the Cambridge specification.
3.2.3.4 Digital technologies	This is not explicitly addressed in the Cambridge specification.
3.2.3.5 Artificial intelligence and cyborgs	This is not explicitly addressed in the Cambridge specification.
The OxfordAQA specification suggests that in their study of section 3.2.3, students would benefit from studying the work of the following sociologists: (Stanley) Cohen, Haraway, Latour, McLuhan, Urry, Uscinski.	These sociological theorists are not explicitly named in the Cambridge specification.