

OxfordAQA

International AS

Sociology (9690)

Scheme of work

For teaching from September 2026 onwards

For International AS exams in June 2027 onwards

For International A-level exams in June 2028 onwards

Introduction

These outline schemes of work are intended to support teachers in planning and delivering the OxfordAQA International AS Sociology (9690) specification. The purpose of this scheme is to provide structured guidance, suggested sequencing and pedagogical support. It is not prescriptive. There are many effective ways to organise the course and centres should adapt this scheme to suit their context, cohort and timetable.

This scheme covers the AS content only, representing 50% of the full International A-level. It assumes approximately 135 taught hours, based on four and a half lessons per week across one academic year.

The specification content (and sequence) for AS consists of:

- Families
- Socialisation and social control
- Research methods and theory (including structured data analysis and application work)

This sequencing allows students to develop substantive sociological knowledge first, before applying methodological understanding in a more synoptic and evaluative way at the end of the year 1.

Course Aims and Rationale

The International AS Sociology course aims to:

- Develop students' understanding of sociological theories, concepts and methods
- Encourage critical thinking and evaluation of competing perspectives
- Enable students to apply sociological knowledge to their own society or one they know well
- Build extended writing skills appropriate to AS level
- Develop confident engagement with quantitative and qualitative data

A central feature of this specification is its international dimension. Students are required, in extended responses, to draw on examples from their own society or one they know about. This is explicitly required in 20-mark questions in both units.

Therefore, throughout the course, teachers should:

- Regularly integrate comparative examples
- Encourage students to apply concepts to local contexts
- Practise structured evaluative writing using societal evidence

Assessment structure

Students sit two written examinations:

Unit 1: Introducing Sociology

- 1 hour 45 minutes
- 60 marks
- 50% of AS

Section A: Families (40 marks)

- 2-mark definition
- 2-mark outline
- Two 4-mark identify and explain
- 8-mark “Explain”
- 20-mark “Evaluate” (with societal application)

Section B: Research Methods (20 marks)

- Short knowledge questions
- Structured data interpretation
- Application to an unseen issue of global sociological significance

Unit 2: Exploring Sociology

- 1 hour 45 minutes
- 60 marks
- 50% of AS

Section A: Socialisation and social control (40 marks)

- Short knowledge questions
- 8-mark explanation
- 20-mark evaluation (with societal application)

Section B: Research methods and theory (20 marks)

- One 20-mark extended evaluation question

Assessment objectives

The course should deliberately develop:

Knowledge precision (AO1)

- Accurate use of sociological terminology
- Confident reference to named sociologists
- Clear understanding of concepts

Application (AO2)

- Use of local societal examples
- Interpretation of quantitative data
- Application of theory to context

Evaluation (AO3)

- Compare perspectives
- Assess strengths and limitations
- Reach justified conclusions

Extended writing practice should begin early and increase in sophistication throughout the year.

In 20-mark questions:

- AO1 = 6
- AO2 = 7
- AO3 = 7

This means:

- Students must do more than describe.
- Societal application is essential.
- Evaluation must be sustained and comparative.

The scheme of work therefore builds progressively towards high-level evaluative writing.

Approach to teaching Research methods

Research methods are assessed in **both Units** and in two distinct forms:

1. Short structured questions
2. Extended 20-mark evaluative essay (Unit 2)

The specification content includes:

- Quantitative and qualitative approaches
- Sampling
- Validity and reliability
- Ethical issues
- Data interpretation
- Sociological theory (Marxism, feminism, functionalism, interactionism, postmodernism etc.)

In this scheme:

- Core methods are taught as a discrete topic after substantive content.
- However, methodological thinking is embedded earlier (e.g. when studying family research or crime statistics).
- The final section includes structured practice on:
 - Data interpretation
 - Application to global issues
 - Writing high-level 20-mark research methods responses

This mirrors the exam structure and ensures students understand the applied nature of the research methods section.

Teaching time allocation

Topic	Approx. Hours
Families	40 hours
Socialisation and social control	40 hours
Research methods and theory	30 hours
Revision and consolidation	10–15 hours

This allows:

- Depth over surface coverage
- Regular extended writing practice
- Integration of international examples
- Structured exam preparation

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Topic 1: Families

Weeks One to Two – Families, Marriage and Kinship

Specification content

- Types of family: extended families, including vertically and horizontally extended; nuclear families; single parent families.
- Alternatives to families, including communes, living alone, foster care and children's homes.
- Therborn's types of family system.
- Variations between cultures: matriarchal and patriarchal families.
- Types of marriage: arranged marriages; love marriages; monogamy.

Note: if appropriate to the local context and not restricted by law or regulation, other types of marriage may also be taught, such as polygamy. These will not be directly assessed in the exam, but would be credited if used in a relevant way to answer a question.

Learning outcomes

Students should:

- Define and accurately distinguish between nuclear, extended (vertical and horizontal) and single-parent families.
- Explain what is meant by kinship and how kinship networks operate.
- Describe alternatives to the family including communes, living alone and foster care.
- Outline the key features of Therborn's types of family system.
- Explain the distinction between patriarchal and matriarchal systems.
- Define arranged marriage, love marriage and monogamy using precise sociological language.
- Apply examples from their own society or a society they know well.
- Use comparative examples to illustrate variation in marriage systems and authority structures.
- Apply Therborn's typology to specific countries or regions.
- Interpret simple demographic data to explain why certain family types may dominate.
- Evaluate whether the nuclear family is universal or culturally specific.
- Assess whether globalisation has reduced differences between family systems.
- Consider whether marriage systems reflect structure (tradition, religion, economy) or agency (choice, individualisation).
- Critically reflect on ethnocentrism in discussions of family life.

Suggested timing

8-10 hours

Possible teaching and learning activities

- This section develops students' understanding of the diversity and complexity of family life across different societies. Students move beyond everyday assumptions and develop the ability to analyse family structures using precise sociological terminology. Throughout, emphasis should be placed on comparison, evaluation and careful use of concepts. Students should be encouraged to recognise both diversity and pattern, and to avoid ethnocentric judgements.
- Teaching should model clarity of explanation, accurate definitions and structured analytical writing. Each subsection should build cumulatively so that students leave this topic able to compare family systems confidently in an 8-mark or 20-mark response.

Defining the family and kinship

- Teaching begins by explicitly challenging the assumption that there is a single, universal definition of the family.
- Students are informed that sociologists debate definitions because families vary across time, culture and social context.
- Emphasise that the aim is analytical understanding rather than evaluation or judgement.
- Starter activity (concept check):
 - Students write a one-sentence definition of “family”.
 - Students write a one-sentence definition of “household”.
 - Students underline key words in their definitions.
 - Students identify which words imply biology, law, co-residence or emotion.
 - Students compare answers in pairs and identify differences.
- Teacher gathers responses and highlights common assumptions, such as:
 - Families must live together.
 - Families must include parents and children.
 - Families must be based on biological relationships.
 - Families must be legally recognised.
 - Families must involve marriage.
 - Families must involve children.
- Teacher introduces the key sociological idea that family is socially constructed and may be defined using different criteria depending on social norms and cultural expectations.
- Clarify that “socially constructed” means shaped by social expectations, values and institutions rather than biologically fixed or universal.
- Structured scenario analysis:
- Students could be presented with carefully designed fictional household profiles representing a range of global and cultural contexts. These examples should illustrate variation without reinforcing stereotypes.
- Examples include:
 - A married couple with two dependent children.
 - A grandparent raising grandchildren while parents work overseas.
 - A child living between two separated parental households.
 - A cohabiting couple without children.
 - Two adult siblings sharing long-term accommodation for economic reasons.
 - A long-term foster placement arranged by the state.
 - An elderly person living alone but supported daily by relatives nearby.
 - A transnational family maintaining daily digital contact and sending remittances.
- For each profile, students:
 - Decide whether it could be considered a family.
 - Identify the criteria they are using.
 - Consider whether those criteria would apply in all societies.
 - Identify which examples challenge their initial assumptions.
 - Suggest an alternative definition if needed.
 - Discuss whether emotional bonds alone are sufficient for classification.
- Teacher records criteria under clear conceptual headings:
 - Biological ties.
 - Legal recognition.
 - Emotional bonds.
 - Economic interdependence.
 - Co-residence.
 - Social recognition.
 - Long-term commitment.
- Teacher explicitly distinguishes between:
 - Household – people who live together in the same dwelling.
 - Family – socially recognised relationships of care, obligation and responsibility.
 - Kinship – wider network of related individuals beyond the immediate household.

- Key terminology is introduced clearly and revisited repeatedly:
 - Consanguineal kinship – relationships based on blood.
 - Affinal kinship – relationships created through marriage.
 - Fictive or social kinship – relationships based on care rather than blood or law.
 - Bilateral and patrilineal/matrilineal systems (brief introduction where relevant).
- Kinship diagram activity (applied understanding):
 - Students construct one vertically extended example.
 - Students construct one horizontally extended example.
 - Students label generations and indicate age differences.
 - Students label household boundaries clearly.
 - Students indicate direction of care or economic support using arrows.
 - Students explain in writing whether the diagram represents household or wider kinship.
- Teacher checks for misconceptions, such as assuming all kin live together or that biological ties are always primary.
- Consolidation task (analytical writing):
 - Students write a structured paragraph answering:
 - “Why is it difficult for sociologists to produce a universal definition of the family?”
 - Students are encouraged to include at least three criteria, one comparative example and one evaluative point.

Types of family structures

- Teaching begins with explicit, exam-ready definitions modelled by the teacher and written clearly. For example:
 - Nuclear family: two parents and their dependent children living together in the same household.
 - Vertically extended family: a family including three or more generations.
 - Horizontally extended family: a family including wider relatives such as siblings, aunts, uncles or cousins.
 - Single parent family: one adult living with one or more dependent children.
- Students practise writing these definitions from memory.
- Teacher emphasises precision of wording for 2-mark questions and clarity of generational distinction.

Nuclear families

- Teaching includes:
 - Historical association with industrial and post-industrial societies.
 - Links to labour mobility and geographic relocation.
 - Smaller household size compared with agricultural societies.
 - Economic independence from extended kin.
 - Discussion of why nuclear families are often presented as the ‘norm’ in media and policy discourse.
- Brief explanation of industrialisation and urbanisation for contextual clarity.
- Paired analytical task:
 - “Explain one reason why industrialisation may encourage nuclear family households.”
 - Students write a short, structured response using cause-and-effect language.
 - Teacher models a high-quality 4-mark answer and highlights use of terminology such as ‘labour mobility’ and ‘geographical independence’.
- Extension: students consider whether nuclear families are always isolated from wider kin networks.

Extended families

- Teacher uses a visual kinship diagram to explain vertical and horizontal extension.
- Students could annotate diagrams to show generational layers.
- Structured activity: Identify the Extension
 - Students are given short household descriptions.
 - Students identify whether the example shows vertical, horizontal, both or neither.
 - Students justify their answer using correct terminology.
 - Students explain whether extension is co-residential or support-based.
 - Students identify economic or cultural reasons for extension.
- Teacher addresses common misconception:
 - Extended families do not always require co-residence; support networks may extend beyond the household and operate through regular contact, shared childcare or financial remittances.

Single parent families

- Teaching includes:
 - Clear definition.
 - Structural causes such as divorce, separation, widowhood, migration and personal choice.
 - Recognition that single parent families are found across a wide range of societies.
 - Discussion of how social attitudes and welfare systems may influence prevalence.
- Students categorise causes into:
 - Demographic factors.
 - Economic factors.
 - Social or cultural factors.
 - Legal factors.
- Media analysis activity (critical thinking):
 - Students analyse two anonymised extracts about single parent families.
 - Identify 'value-laden' language.
 - Identify whether structural causes are acknowledged.
 - Compare media framing with sociological explanation.
 - Suggest how wording might influence public perception.
- Embedded assessment and feedback:
 - Define a vertically extended family (2 marks).
 - Outline one reason for the existence of single parent families (2 marks).
 - Identify and briefly explain one difference between nuclear and extended families (4 marks).
 - Teacher provides model answers, highlights command words and reinforces exam technique.

Alternatives to families

- Teaching establishes that not all individuals live within traditional family structures and that alternative arrangements may arise due to structural, economic or demographic change.
- Emphasise descriptive analysis rather than value judgement.

Communes

- Exploration includes:
 - Collective living arrangements.
 - Shared domestic labour and childcare.
 - Shared economic resources.
 - Religious, ecological or ideological motivations.
 - Internal governance and decision-making processes.
 - Shared values and collective responsibility.
- Students compare communal living with nuclear households in terms of organisation, authority and division of labour.
- Students consider whether communes replicate or challenge traditional family functions.

Living alone

- Teaching links living alone to:
 - Urbanisation and employment patterns.
 - Labour mobility.
 - Ageing populations.
 - Changing life-course patterns.
 - Individualisation and independence.
- Discussion question:
 - “Does living alone necessarily mean social isolation?”
 - Students support answers with reasoning and examples.
 - Teacher encourages balanced evaluation.

Foster care and children’s homes

- Teaching focuses on:
 - Reasons for state intervention.
 - Legal safeguarding frameworks.
 - Variation in lived experiences.
 - Importance of stability and continuity of care.
 - Role of social services.
- Students complete a structured comparison grid examining:
 - Stability.
 - Economic security.
 - Emotional support.
 - Autonomy.
 - Social integration.
 - Long-term outcomes.
- Teacher emphasises that experiences vary and that policy context influences arrangements.

Therborn’s types of family system

- Introduction to Therborn as a sociologist who developed a framework for comparing global family systems.
- Teacher explains that typologies are analytical tools used to identify patterns and differences across societies.
- Starter discussion:
 - “If we compare families across societies, what dimensions should we examine?”
- Student responses are grouped into analytical dimensions such as:
 - Authority structures.
 - Gender roles and hierarchy.
 - Regulation of marriage.
 - Intergenerational control and obligation.
 - Inheritance patterns.
 - Sexual regulation.
 - Property rights.
- Students analyse anonymised society profiles and identify:
 - Who holds authority.
 - How marriage is arranged.
 - The position and autonomy of women.
 - Expectations of children.
 - Role of extended kin networks.
 - Degree of state involvement.
- Therborn’s categories are then introduced and applied systematically to the profiles.
- Teacher models how to move from description to explanation, using evidence from the profiles.

- Students practise a short comparative explanation using the framework, ensuring clear paragraph structure.
- Higher-level discussion explores:
 - Strengths of typologies in identifying patterns.
 - Limitations and risks of oversimplification.
 - Possibility of hybrid or transitional systems.
 - Impact of globalisation, migration and economic development.
- Mini-evaluation task: students write one strength and one limitation of Therborn's framework.

Cultural variation: patriarchal and matrifocal systems

- Teaching establishes that family structures vary significantly between societies and historical periods.
- Emphasise that variation exists within societies as well as between them and that systems evolve over time.
- Explicit teaching of patriarchal families includes:
 - Male dominance in decision-making.
 - Control of property and inheritance.
 - Gendered division of labour.
 - Regulation of female sexuality.
 - Expectations surrounding obedience and hierarchy.
- Explicit teaching of matrifocal or matriarchal systems includes:
 - Female-centred kin networks.
 - Alternative inheritance systems.
 - Variation in authority structures.
 - Different patterns of caregiving and responsibility.
 - Economic roles of women.
- Students examine short cultural case studies and identify:
 - Where power lies.
 - How authority is legitimised.
 - How economic structures shape family roles.
 - Whether systems are changing over time.
 - Evidence of continuity and change.
- Structured comparison task: students create a table comparing patriarchal and matrifocal systems across at least three dimensions.
- Teacher reinforces avoidance of stereotyping and recognition of internal diversity and historical change.

Types of marriage

- Teaching of arranged marriages includes:
 - Role of families in partner selection.
 - Cultural and religious context.
 - Clear distinction between arranged and forced marriage.
 - Importance of consent and legal frameworks.
 - Recognition of variation within societies.
 - Changing attitudes over time.
- Teaching of love marriages includes:
 - Individual choice.
 - Romantic ideology.
 - Links to individualisation and modernity.
 - Changing expectations about gender equality.
 - Influence of media and global culture.
- Teaching of monogamy includes:
 - One partner at a time.

- Serial monogamy.
 - Historical variation.
 - Legal frameworks in different societies.
 - Social expectations surrounding fidelity.
- Students complete a structured comparison table examining:
 - Degree of personal choice.
 - Role of extended kin.
 - Gender expectations.
 - Economic considerations.
 - Legal regulation.
 - Stability and permanence.
- Analytical discussion explores how marriage practices reflect cultural values, economic systems, religious beliefs and changing social norms.
- Short 4-mark practice question embedded to consolidate understanding.

Exam skills and consolidation

- Regular retrieval practice focuses on key definitions, distinctions and comparative examples.
- Retrieval may include low-stakes quizzes, mini-whiteboard responses or paired recall tasks.
- Students practise:
 - 2-mark definition questions.
 - 4-mark identify and briefly explain questions.
 - 8-mark explanation questions requiring comparison and analysis.
 - Structured planning for 8-mark answers.
- Teacher models clear paragraph structure, topic sentences and use of comparative language.
- Teacher highlights importance of precise terminology, linking back to the question and including evaluative comments where appropriate.
- End-of-section assessment:
 - 8-mark explanation question on variation in family and marriage systems.
 - Students receive structured feedback linked to AO1 and AO3.
 - Opportunity for improvement task based on feedback.
 - Students reflect on progress in conceptual understanding since the start of the topic.

Weeks Three to Four – Perspectives on families and the relationship between families and society

Specification content

Functionalism:

- functions of the family
- how the nuclear family ‘fits’ modern industrial societies

Marxism:

- families as agents of social control

Feminisms:

- families as shaping the position of men and women in society

Learning outcomes

Students should:

- Define and accurately use key concepts including: functions of the family, primary socialisation, stabilisation of adult personalities, ideological state apparatus, social reproduction, patriarchy, unpaid domestic labour, social control.
- Explain functionalist views of the role of the family in maintaining social order.
- Analyse how functionalists link the nuclear family to industrialisation.
- Explain Marxist views of the family as serving capitalism.
- Analyse feminist perspectives on gender inequality within families.
- Compare and contrast functionalist, Marxist and feminist approaches.
- Apply perspectives to examples from their own society or a society they know.
- Develop extended responses in line with AS assessment objectives (AO1 knowledge, AO2 application, AO3 analysis and evaluation), preparing students for 8-mark “Explain” and 20-mark “Evaluate” questions in Section A of Unit 1

Suggested timing

8-10 hours

Possible teaching and learning activities

Introducing sociological perspectives on families

- Begin by explicitly introducing the concept of a sociological perspective as a framework for explaining how society works, rather than describing individual behaviour. Clarify that perspectives are based on assumptions about social order, power and inequality, and that no single perspective offers a complete explanation of family life.
- Construct, with students, a simple comparison organiser on the board with three columns:
 - name of perspective
 - main role of the family
 - who benefits most?
 - This organiser remains visible and is gradually filled in as each perspective is taught.
- Reinforce for international students that families vary widely across societies and cultures. Students are encouraged to draw examples from any society they are familiar with. It is made clear that there is no expectation to describe a “typical” or Western family model.
- As a diagnostic starter, present statements such as:

- “Families help keep society stable.”
- “Families benefit some groups more than others.”
- “Family life reflects wider inequalities in society.”
- Students suggest which perspective might agree with each statement. These initial responses are revisited at the end of the unit to check conceptual development.

Functionalism: functions of the family; how the nuclear family ‘fits’ modern industrial societies

- Introduce functionalism as a consensus perspective that views society as based on shared norms and values. Students sketch a visual representation of society as a system (or body), labelling institutions such as family, education and economy and annotating how each contributes to stability. This visual model provides a consistent reference point.
- Explore the concept of value consensus through discussion. Students identify values they believe are widely shared within their society and reflect on where these were first learned. This leads directly into primary socialisation.
- Teach the main functions of the family in depth, ensuring clarity of terminology and meaning:
 - Primary socialisation: children learn norms and values. Students identify mechanisms such as imitation and reinforcement and apply them to brief everyday examples.
 - Stabilisation of adult personalities: the family provides emotional support. Students consider contemporary pressures such as long working hours or economic insecurity and discuss how family life may act as a refuge.
 - Economic function: families meet basic material needs. Students reflect on how income, housing and resources are organised within households.
 - Reproduction: families produce new members of society and ensure continuity.
- Emphasise that functionalists view these functions as benefiting both individuals and society as a whole. Students practise writing concise explanatory paragraphs linking one function directly to wider social stability.
- Introduce instrumental and expressive roles. Instrumental roles are associated with financial provision; expressive roles with care and emotional support. Clarify that functionalists see this division as efficient and complementary rather than unequal. Provide short fictional descriptions of different household arrangements (nuclear families, multigenerational households, dual-earner couples, urban and rural settings). Students identify which functions are present and how they are carried out in practice, annotating key details with functionalist concepts.
- Develop the argument that the nuclear family ‘fits’ modern industrial society. Students compare simplified descriptions of pre-industrial and industrial societies, focusing on geographic mobility, role specialisation and labour markets. It is stressed that this is a theoretical explanation and does not imply that all families are nuclear or that other forms are unsuccessful.
- Throughout delivery, evaluative questioning is embedded: Does this perspective assume harmony? Are all families equally able to perform these functions? Students add marginal notes identifying potential limitations.
- Students complete a short written response explaining why functionalists believe the nuclear family fits modern industrial societies. Peer feedback focuses on clarity, conceptual accuracy and explicit analytical links.

Marxism: families as agents of social control

- Introduce Marxism as a conflict perspective concerned with social class and inequality. Return to the earlier systems diagram and adapt it to show power relationships, prompting students to consider who benefits from existing social arrangements.
- Explain that Marxists argue families help maintain capitalism rather than benefit everyone equally.

- Introduce Engels' explanation of the historical development of the family. He argued that the monogamous nuclear family emerged alongside the development of private property. As men accumulated property and wealth, ensuring legitimate heirs became essential. Stable monogamous relationships allowed property to be passed down through the male line. Students summarise this argument in their own words before identifying how this links family structure to the protection of class inequality.
- This historical account underpins the wider Marxist claim that the family is not a natural or universal institution but one shaped by economic systems. Students consider whether contemporary family forms continue to reflect economic priorities, encouraging evaluative thinking from the outset.
- Explore how families act as agents of social control. Teaching covers how families:
 - socialise children into obedience and respect for authority
 - prepare children for working life
 - normalise hierarchy and inequality
 - provide unpaid domestic labour
 - encourage consumption within capitalist economies
- Clarify that Marxists are critiquing the role of families within the economic system, not individual parents or households.
- Provide a short narrative describing parental expectations around work, discipline and success. Students identify how conformity is encouraged and how work and hierarchy are presented as normal. Responses are explicitly linked to reproduction of the workforce and maintenance of class inequality.
- Contemporary examples such as housing wealth, business ownership and educational advantage are examined to illustrate intergenerational inequality. Students trace how advantage can be transmitted across generations, constructing clear explanatory chains.
- Students contrast how functionalists and Marxists would interpret the same fictional family arrangement, strengthening comparative thinking.
- Evaluation is woven into teaching: Do all families own property? Can families resist capitalism? Does Marxism reduce relationships to economics? Students practise writing comparative sentences beginning, for example, "From a functionalist perspective..." and "In contrast, Marxists would argue..."
- Timed 8-mark practice focuses on explaining families as agents of social control, followed by peer marking against simplified criteria.

Feminisms: families as shaping the position of men and women in society

- Introduce feminism as a perspective concerned with gender inequality and patriarchy. Begin by asking students whether family life may affect men and women differently. Responses are categorised before formal definitions are provided.
- Teach key feminist ideas, including:
 - unequal division of domestic labour
 - the triple shift
 - men's greater control over decision-making and resources
 - families as potential sites of oppression
 - social construction of gender in families (include the work of Ann Oakley)
- Emphasise that feminist analysis focuses on structural inequality and social expectations rather than individual blame.
- Provide fictional household profiles using neutral labels (e.g. Person A, Person B), including information about paid work, unpaid labour, childcare, emotional responsibilities and decision-making. Students identify who does which work, who holds power and whether roles appear gendered. Using feminist concepts, they analyse whether patriarchy may operate subtly, even where arrangements appear modern.
- Time-use data is examined to identify persistent inequalities in domestic labour. Students are encouraged to move beyond description and explain why these patterns may continue.

- Sensitive issues such as domestic violence are addressed carefully within structural explanations of gendered power, ensuring a respectful and appropriate classroom environment.
- Differences between liberal, Marxist and radical feminist approaches are clarified through structured comparison. Each strand's explanation and limitations are summarised before drawing broader conclusions.
- Evaluation remains central: Are gender roles becoming more equal? Does feminism overgeneralise? How do class and ethnicity intersect with gender? Students construct balanced evaluative paragraphs.
- Students collaboratively plan a 20-mark essay evaluating sociological explanations of the role of the family, ensuring coverage of multiple perspectives and sustained comparison.

Comparing perspectives on families

- Draw together the three perspectives explicitly:
 - Functionalism emphasises stability and shared values.
 - Marxism focuses on class inequality and social control.
 - Feminism highlights gender inequality and patriarchy.
- Students complete a comparison grid or analyse one fictional family using all three perspectives, identifying how interpretation shifts depending on theoretical lens.
- The teacher models evaluative language such as:
 - "From a functionalist perspective..."
 - "In contrast, Marxists would argue..."
 - "Feminists criticise this arrangement because..."
- Low-stakes retrieval quizzes reinforce terminology and conceptual precision.

Links to assessment

- Direct preparation for 8-mark "Explain the view..." questions.
- Preparation for extended evaluative questions requiring comparison and judgement.
- Students are supported in applying theory to examples, contrasting perspectives and structuring coherent written responses using AO1, AO2 and AO3.

Weeks Five to Six – Social change and changing families

Specification content

This section examines how families have changed over time and the reasons for these changes. It focuses on the relationship between wider social, economic and demographic developments and family structures. Teaching should reflect the fact that patterns of family change vary between societies and historical periods and that family forms are shaped by cultural, legal and economic contexts.

The specification says:

- **Demographic changes:** family size; birth and death rates; infant and child mortality; migration (internal and international); ageing populations.
- **Explanations of demographic changes.**
The relationship between families and industrialisation and between families and urbanisation.
- **Family diversity:** newer types of families including pivot/sandwich generation, reconstituted/blended families, living apart together, child free couples, and beanpole families.
Note: If appropriate to the local context and not restricted by law or regulation, other types of family diversity may be considered, such as cohabitation and civil partnerships. These will not be directly assessed in the exam but would be credited if used in a relevant way to answer a question.
- **Explanations of family diversity, including how demographic changes and laws and social policies can affect families.**
 - Individualisation; personal life (Smart).
 - Diasporas and transnational families.
 - Friends as family.
 - Pets/ companion animals as family members.

Learning outcomes

Students should:

- Define key demographic concepts accurately using sociological terminology.
- Explain reasons for demographic change using economic, political and cultural factors.
- Analyse the relationship between industrialisation, urbanisation and family structure.
- Describe and explain contemporary family diversity.
- Apply the concept of individualisation and Smart's personal life perspective.
- Analyse the impact of migration on family life.
- Evaluate explanations of changing family patterns using sociological perspectives.
- Construct extended responses in line with AS assessment objectives.

Suggested timing

8-10 hours

Possible teaching and learning activities

Social change and family life

- Families should be introduced as social institutions that change over time rather than remaining fixed or universal. Teaching should emphasise that family forms reflect wider economic, political and cultural structures rather than biological inevitability.

- Comparisons between families in the past and present, or between families in different societies, can be used to illustrate changes in size, structure and roles within the family, including who lives together, how authority operates and how responsibilities are organised. Teachers may use brief historical descriptions of pre-industrial extended households alongside contemporary urban households to prompt structured comparison and analytical questioning.
- Students should explore how ideas about what counts as a “normal” family vary across cultures and historical periods. Media representations, policy language and textbook imagery may be used to stimulate discussion about whether the nuclear family is dominant, idealised or socially constructed.
- Students should be encouraged to identify structural drivers of change, such as industrialisation, demographic transition, migration and legal reform, rather than simply describing family forms. Teachers may present short household vignettes and require students to suggest one structural explanation for each arrangement.
- A simple timeline activity may be used to map key social developments (industrialisation, expansion of women’s education, welfare reform, global migration flows) against changing family patterns. This supports synoptic understanding of the relationship between social change and family life.

Demographic changes: family size; birth and death rates; infant and child mortality; migration; ageing populations

- Demographic change refers to long-term shifts in population patterns. Key terms should be clearly defined and revisited regularly to ensure precision in written responses:
 - birth rate
 - death rate
 - infant mortality
 - life expectancy
 - ageing population
 - internal migration and international migration
- Falling birth rates in many societies have resulted in smaller families with fewer children per household. Teaching should explore implications including increased parental investment, altered sibling dynamics and long-term effects on dependency ratios. Students may analyse simple fertility data and identify one likely consequence for family structure.
- Declining infant and child mortality has altered parental attitudes towards children, who are increasingly viewed as emotionally valuable rather than economically necessary. This can be linked to child-centredness and shifts in parenting ideology.
- Increased life expectancy has contributed to ageing populations and the growth of multigenerational relationships. The concept of the beanpole family could be introduced in this context. Students should consider how extended longevity reshapes caring responsibilities and intergenerational dependency.
- The concept of the dependency ratio may be introduced to deepen understanding of ageing populations and their implications for family support and state provision.
- Population pyramids, demographic tables and simple graphs may be used to develop interpretation skills. Students should practise describing one demographic trend and explaining one impact on family life.
- Comparative discussion should be embedded throughout, recognising that demographic change occurs at different rates and in different forms across societies.

Explanations of demographic changes

- Improvements in healthcare, sanitation and nutrition have reduced death rates and increased life expectancy. Teaching should link these developments to economic growth and state capacity rather than presenting them as isolated factors.
- Greater access to education, particularly for women, alongside contraception and family planning, has played a significant role in declining birth rates. Students should explore how

female education links to delayed marriage, labour market participation and smaller family size.

- Changing social attitudes towards marriage and parenthood reflect broader cultural shifts towards personal choice and fulfilment. Teachers may model a causal chain, such as: female education → delayed childbirth → fewer children → smaller households → altered intergenerational support structures.
- The demographic transition model may be introduced as a broad framework for understanding long-term population shifts. Students should recognise that it is a general model rather than a universal rule.
- Students may construct explanatory chains linking one demographic change to multiple family consequences, reinforcing analytical rather than descriptive thinking.
- Evaluation should be embedded by asking whether demographic change reflects structural constraint, individual agency or an interaction between the two.

The relationship between families and industrialisation and between families and urbanisation

- Industrialisation refers to the shift from agricultural-based economies to industrial wage labour. Teaching should explore how the movement of work out of the home altered the economic function of the family.
- Students should examine how the family became less of a unit of production and more focused on emotional support, consumption and the socialisation of children. Comparisons between pre-industrial extended households and industrial nuclear families can reinforce understanding of structural transformation.
- The functional fit thesis associated with Talcott Parsons may be introduced, encouraging students to evaluate whether the nuclear family is particularly suited to industrial society.
- Students should also consider the concept of the modified extended family, recognising that extended kin networks may adapt rather than disappear during industrialisation.
- Urbanisation involves large-scale movement from rural areas to towns and cities and is closely linked to industrialisation. Students should explore how urban housing constraints and labour mobility often result in smaller household units.
- However, urban environments may generate alternative support networks, including friendship groups, community organisations and formal services. Students may identify one structural difference and one area of continuity between rural and urban family life.
- Teachers should embed evaluative questioning throughout, asking whether industrialisation and urbanisation necessarily weaken family bonds or simply reorganise them.

Family diversity: pivot/sandwich generation; reconstituted/blended families; living apart together; child-free couples; beanpole families

- Family diversity refers to the wide range of family forms found within and between societies and challenges the assumption that the nuclear family is universally dominant.
- Reconstituted or blended families arise from divorce and repartnering. Students should explore how higher divorce rates and changing attitudes towards remarriage contribute to this form.
- Living apart together (LAT) relationships involve couples maintaining intimate relationships while living separately, reflecting changing expectations around independence and commitment.
- Beanpole families reflect vertical extension across generations due to longer life expectancy and low fertility.
- The pivot or sandwich generation highlights adults caring for both dependent children and ageing parents, illustrating pressures created by demographic change.
- Students may use short household descriptions to classify family types accurately and suggest one structural explanation for each example.
- The concept of family practices may be introduced to shift focus from structure to what families do in everyday life. This supports movement away from rigid typologies.

- The concept of social construction should be revisited to reinforce that definitions of family are shaped by culture, ideology and law.

Explanations of family diversity, including how demographic changes and laws and social policies can affect families

- Increasing family diversity can be explained by demographic change, including longer life expectancy, lower birth rates and higher divorce rates. Students should link each demographic trend directly to a family outcome.
- Changes in laws relating to marriage, divorce and parental rights have expanded the range of legally recognised family forms. Teachers should require students to connect specific reforms to structural changes in family life.
- Social policies such as childcare provision, welfare support and employment regulation influence decisions around work and care. Students should practise linking policy to family consequence rather than describing policy in isolation.
- Economic insecurity and housing costs may also be explored as factors influencing delayed marriage and childbearing.
- Students may construct short evaluative paragraphs considering whether diversity represents fragmentation, adaptation or flexibility within the family institution.

Individualisation; personal life (Carol Smart)

- Individualisation suggests that family relationships are increasingly shaped by personal choice rather than obligation. Students should explore concepts such as reflexivity, negotiated relationships and emotional individualism.
- The personal life perspective associated with Carol Smart emphasises lived relationships, memory, biography and everyday practices rather than abstract structural categories.
- Students should distinguish between broad individualisation theory and the personal life perspective, recognising that Smart critiques overly individualistic accounts and stresses relational connectedness.
- Friends as family may be explored as examples of chosen or fictive kin relationships. Students should consider how friendship networks can provide emotional and practical support similar to traditional kinship ties.
- Pets or companion animals may be discussed as emotionally significant members of personal life networks, prompting reflection on how family boundaries are defined and negotiated.
- Students should evaluate whether the personal life perspective complements or challenges structural explanations such as industrialisation and demographic change.

Diasporas and transnational families

- Diasporas refer to populations dispersed from an original homeland who maintain social and cultural connections across borders.
- Transnational families involve members living in different countries while maintaining economic and emotional ties, often facilitated by remittances and digital communication.
- The concept of globalisation may be introduced to explain how advances in transport and communication enable sustained cross-border family relationships.
- Students should explore how transnational parenting challenges assumptions about co-residence and caregiving.
- Brief case examples may be used to identify structural causes of migration and family consequences, encouraging balanced analysis of both benefits and challenges.

Applying knowledge and consolidation

- Regular structured practice should include definition questions, short explanatory questions and longer evaluative essays.
- Students should draw explicit links between demographic change, industrialisation, urbanisation, migration, legal reform, individualisation and family diversity. Concept mapping may be used to visualise these interconnections.

- A structured integration activity may require students to link one structural factor (e.g. industrialisation) to one demographic consequence, one family structural change and one evaluative challenge.
- Students may plan a 20-mark essay evaluating explanations of family change, integrating structural, cultural and personal life perspectives.
- Reflection on possible future developments in family life may be used to consolidate understanding, ensuring responses remain sociological rather than opinion-based.

Weeks Seven to Eight – Gender, age and the experience of family life

Specification content

This section examines gender, age and the experience of family life. Students should understand that family life is experienced differently by men and women, by children, adult children and older people and that these differences are shaped by roles, responsibilities, power and status within families. Teaching should emphasise that experiences of family life vary within and between societies and that expectations linked to gender and age are socially constructed i.e. influenced by cultural, legal and economic contexts.

The specification says:

- Gender: ‘traditional’ roles of the male and female in families; the female/expressive role including emotional support and the triple shift; the male/instrumental or ‘breadwinner’ role.
- Changes to these roles and reasons for changes.
- The division of domestic labour; gender differences in power and decision making within families.
- Violence against women and abuse in families.
- Children: the status and roles of children in different societies; child centredness.
- Adult children, including ‘boomerang’ families.
- Older people, including the status and roles of older people in different societies and the roles of grandparents.

Learning outcomes

Students should:

- Define and apply key concepts including expressive and instrumental roles, triple shift, dual burden, symmetrical family, patriarchy, child centredness, boomerang families and beanpole families.
- Explain functionalist, Marxist and feminist views of gender roles within families.
- Analyse reasons for changes in gender roles, including economic, legal, demographic and cultural factors.
- Examine patterns in the division of domestic labour and power relations within households.
- Evaluate sociological explanations of violence within families.
- Compare the status and roles of children and older people across different societies and historical periods.
- Apply knowledge to international contexts and to students’ own society.
- Develop extended responses in line with AS assessment objectives (AO1, AO2, AO3).

Suggested timing

8-10 hours

Possible teaching and learning activities

Gender: ‘traditional’ roles of the male and female in families; the expressive and instrumental roles; the triple shift

- Before introducing theory, ask students to write down what they think are the main responsibilities of mothers and fathers in families today. This provides a starting point and helps reveal assumptions that can later be questioned.
- Begin by clearly defining instrumental and expressive roles on the board. Provide a short, simple explanation of each and one clear example. Then show a short paragraph describing a family’s daily routine. Ask students to underline examples of instrumental

roles in one colour and expressive roles in another. Discuss answers together so expectations are clear.

- Revisit (or introduce) Oakley's critique by briefly explaining what is meant by social construction. Give concrete examples such as toy adverts, children's books or school expectations. Ask students to explain, in a few sentences, how these early experiences might influence adult family roles.
- Introduce the dual burden and triple shift step by step. First define paid work, domestic labour and emotional labour. Then provide a simple timetable for two adults in a household. Students label which activities fit each category. Follow this with a short discussion about which tasks are visible and which are often unnoticed.
- Provide two or three clear family case studies (around half a page each). After reading, students answer structured questions: Who earns the income? Who does most of the housework? Who makes important decisions? Is there evidence of negotiation? This helps teachers guide discussion without assuming prior knowledge.
- Add a short comparison task where students decide whether each case study reflects change, continuity or a mixture of both. They must justify their view using sociological language.
- Finish with a paragraph task: Explain how gender roles affect daily life in one of the families studied. Provide a writing frame if needed, for example: 'Gender roles influence family life by... This can be seen when... This suggests that...'

Changes to gender roles and reasons for change

- Begin with a quick recap quiz of key structural changes so that understanding is secure before application.
- Start with a short recap list of key social changes (for example increased female employment, access to university, divorce law reform etc). Ensure each is briefly explained before linking it to family life.
- Choose one change and model how to link it to the family. For example: 'If more women work full-time, this may change who looks after children and who does housework.' Make the causal link explicit.
- Students then complete a simple cause-and-effect table with two columns: 'Social change' and 'Effect on family life'. Encourage at least two developed effects for each change.
- Extend this by asking students to consider unintended consequences, such as work-life balance pressures or new forms of inequality.
- Introduce the idea that change is uneven. Provide two short contrasting examples from different societies and ask students to identify reasons for difference (religion, policy, economy).
- End with a short evaluative question: Have gender roles become equal? Students must give one argument for and one argument against, supported by evidence.

The division of domestic labour; gender differences in power and decision making within families

- Begin by asking students to define domestic labour, childcare and decision making in their own words before providing formal definitions. Clarify misconceptions early.
- Clearly define domestic labour, childcare and decision making before discussion begins. Provide simple examples of each.
- Present short, easy-to-read data (for example a table showing hours spent on housework by men and women). Ask students to identify one clear pattern and suggest one reason for it.
- Follow this with a short discussion about reliability: How was the data collected? Could it underestimate invisible work? This strengthens analytical thinking.
- Explain (or revisit) Engels' idea of economic dependence in straightforward terms. Then ask students: If one partner earns much more money, how might this affect decision making?

- Introduce resource theory with a short definition and one example. Students apply this idea to a brief family scenario.
- Compare two families with different income patterns. Students answer guided questions about who holds more power and why.
- Add a short role-play discussion where students take the perspective of different household members negotiating a financial decision. This helps make abstract ideas concrete.
- Extended writing: Explain whether a clear division of labour is fair. Students must refer to at least one sociological idea in their answer.

Violence against women and children

- Begin by defining key terms clearly (domestic violence, abuse, patriarchy). Keep explanations concise and factual.
- Explain radical feminist and Marxist-feminist perspectives in simple language before asking students to apply them.
- Provide a short anonymised scenario and structured questions:
 - What forms of power are shown?
 - Which sociological explanation might apply? Why?
- Compare this with a different explanation such as stress theory. Ask students which explanation they think is stronger and why.
- Briefly outline how laws and policies differ across societies and ask students how this might affect reporting and support.

Children: the status and roles of children in different societies and changes over time; child centredness

- Begin with a simple question: What rights do children have today? List responses before linking to sociological explanation.
- Clearly explain what is meant by childhood being socially constructed. Provide one historical example and one modern example.
- Define child-centredness in simple terms: families placing children's needs at the centre of decisions.
- Students list three ways families show child-centred behaviour today (for example investment in education, organised activities, safeguarding).
- Ask students to consider whether this always benefits children or whether it can create pressure. Encourage balanced discussion.
- Compare with a short example of a society where children contribute economically to the household. Students identify differences in responsibility and authority.
- Written task: Explain how child-centredness changes relationships between parents and children in different societies and changes over time.

Adult children, including 'boomerang' families

- Define boomerang families clearly and provide one real-world example.
- Explain structural reasons such as housing costs and insecure work before asking students to discuss them.
- Teachers could provide a short budgeting example showing income and expenses for a young adult. Students consider why returning home might be practical.
- Compare cultural expectations about independence in two societies. Students explain how this shapes family relationships.
- Evaluation question: Is returning home mainly about personal choice or structural pressure?

Older people: the status and roles of older people in different societies including grandparent roles

- Begin by asking students what challenges and opportunities might come with an ageing population. Record responses before linking to sociological ideas.

- Ensure that students can define key terms such as ‘ageing population’ and ‘beanpole family’.
- Explain how longer life expectancy changes family structure.
- Provide two short examples: one extended family household and one older person living alone. Students compare levels of support and independence.
- Introduce brief discussion of state versus family responsibility for elder care. Ask students to consider advantages and disadvantages of each model.
- Discuss the role of grandparents in childcare and emotional support. Ask students to identify both benefits and possible pressures.
- Short evaluation: Does an ageing population strengthen or strain family life?

Applying knowledge and consolidation

- Use regular short ‘Explain one way...’ questions to check understanding of key concepts.
- Provide clear essay planning structures for extended answers, including prompts for knowledge, application and evaluation.
- End the topic with a synthesis task where students identify one key way gender shapes family life and one key way age shapes family life, supported by sociological evidence.
- Throughout, ensure terminology is defined before use and revisited regularly so understanding remains secure.

Topic 2: Socialisation and Social Control

Weeks Nine to Ten: Individuals and Society

Specification content

- Culture: norms and values; roles; status; stereotypes; subcultures, including ethnic groups in multicultural societies.
- The sociological imagination (Mills); connecting personal troubles and public issues.

Learning outcomes

Students should:

- Define and accurately use key concepts: *culture, norms, values, roles, status (ascribed and achieved), stereotypes, subculture*.
- Explain how culture shapes behaviour and social expectations.
- Analyse how individuals are shaped by social structures.
- Apply the concept of the *sociological imagination* to contemporary examples.
- Distinguish between personal troubles and public issues.
- Use examples from their own society or one they know about.
- Incorporate reference to key thinkers such as C. Wright Mills where appropriate.
- Develop analytical responses suitable for 8-mark and 20-mark extended questions.

Suggested timing

8-10 hours

Possible teaching and learning activities

Culture, norms and values

- Establish a working definition of culture as ‘shared norms, values and patterns of behaviour that guide social life’.
- Teachers may begin with a reflective activity asking students to identify behaviours that feel “normal” in everyday contexts (e.g. classroom conduct, queuing, online communication), using this to demonstrate that such behaviours are socially learned.
- Define values as ‘broad principles about what is desirable in society’. Teachers should emphasise precision in definition, as this is often conflated with norms.
- Require students to identify dominant values within their society (e.g. educational achievement, economic independence, religious observance, respect for authority) and provide institutional examples of how these are reinforced.
- Define norms such as ‘specific behavioural expectations reflecting values’. Teachers may present examples (e.g. punctuality reflecting valuing education; politeness reflecting valuing respect) and require students to generate further applied examples.
- Introduce informal sanctions and ask students to consider how norm violations are responded to in peer groups, families and digital environments.
- Develop comparative understanding through short cross-cultural scenarios to highlight variation in norms across societies.
- Conclude with a short formative task requiring students to write a 4-mark response identifying and explaining two norms operating within their society.

Roles and status

- Define status, distinguishing clearly between ascribed and achieved status. Teachers should model clear examples and check understanding through quick application tasks.
- Students construct a structured “status inventory” and categorise each status accurately. Teachers could present students with a list of known people that have a mixture of different status i.e. some with known ascribed status and others where status is clearly achieved. Students could sort the people into status being more a result of achieved or ascribed status. During discussion, draw out that people will have aspects of their identity that are ascribed and other aspects which are achieved.
- Introduce master status and explore contexts in which one status may dominate social perception.
- Define role as expected behaviour attached to status, ensuring students understand the link between role expectations and underlying norms and values.
- Introduce role conflict and role strain, using contemporary examples relevant to students’ experiences.
- Facilitate discussion on whether achieved status is genuinely meritocratic or shaped by structural inequalities.
- Build in exam practice by modelling an 8-mark explanation of how roles and status influence behaviour.

Stereotypes

- Define stereotypes and clarify distinctions between stereotype, prejudice and discrimination.
- Teachers may elicit examples of stereotypes within students’ societies and guide discussion towards their social origins.
- Teachers could provide short written extracts (e.g. media headlines; or fictitious reports) and ask students to identify implicit stereotypes and consider their consequences.
- Develop analysis of how stereotypes influence identity formation, self-perception and life chances.
- Encourage evaluative discussion around whether stereotypes may sometimes simplify social interaction, while reinforcing the importance of analysing their role in reproducing inequality.
- Students complete a structured 8-mark explanation addressing how stereotypes influence individuals in society.
- Include retrieval practice covering culture, norms, roles and status.

Subcultures in multicultural societies

- Define subculture as ‘a group within wider culture with distinctive norms and values’.
- Explore examples such as youth cultures, ethnic minority communities and religious groups within multicultural societies.
- Teachers may organise small-group investigations of one subculture, requiring students to identify:
 - Core norms and values.
 - Identity markers.
 - Relationship to dominant culture.
- Facilitate structured feedback comparing whether subcultures resist, adapt to or reinforce dominant culture.
- Encourage evaluative questioning around whether subcultures promote diversity or indicate marginalisation.
- Students complete a short written explanation of why subcultures develop in multicultural societies.

The sociological imagination (Mills)

- Introduce C. Wright Mills and define the sociological imagination as ‘the capacity to connect biography and history’.
- Explicitly unpack biography (individual life experiences and opportunities) and history (wider social, economic and political structures).
- Teachers should model the distinction using a structured example (e.g. access to higher education), exploring both individual-level and structural explanations.
- Students write a short applied definition of sociological imagination, including reference to biography and history.
- Conduct retrieval questioning to ensure conceptual clarity.

Personal troubles, public issues and evaluation

- Define personal troubles and public issues, ensuring students understand scale and pattern as key distinctions.
- Present contemporary examples (e.g. unemployment, housing affordability, mental health) and initially elicit individual explanations before reframing structurally.
- Provide a structured comparison table for students to complete, distinguishing individual and structural explanations.
- Introduce the concept of structural location (class, gender, ethnicity, age) and demonstrate how the same personal trouble may vary across social groups.
- Facilitate discussion on the importance of recognising patterns rather than isolated cases.
- Introduce the structure–agency debate, asking students to consider whether structural explanations diminish individual responsibility.
- Organise a structured debate on the statement: “Individuals are primarily responsible for their own success.”
- Conclude with guided planning of a 20-mark essay evaluating whether individuals are largely shaped by society, ensuring integration of:
 - Knowledge of Mills.
 - Application to a society students know.
 - Evaluation incorporating agency.

Assessment opportunities throughout

- 4-mark responses on norms, roles and subcultures.
- 8-mark explanations on stereotypes and sociological imagination.
- 20-mark essay planning integrating structure and agency.
- Retrieval quizzes at the start of selected lessons.
- Peer marking using level descriptors from the specimen mark scheme

Weeks Eleven to Twelve - Socialisation

Specification content

- Agencies of socialisation: family, education, peer group, mass media, religion.
- Primary and secondary socialisation.
- Formal and informal social control.
- Sociological perspectives on socialisation: functionalist; Marxist; feminist; social action/interactionist.

Learning outcomes

Students should:

- Define socialisation and distinguish clearly between primary and secondary socialisation.
- Explain how different agencies transmit norms, values and identities.
- Apply functionalist, Marxist, feminist and interactionist perspectives to socialisation.
- Analyse how socialisation contributes to social integration and social control.
- Evaluate competing explanations of the nature and role of socialisation.
- Construct sustained 20-mark evaluative responses using perspectives comparatively.

Suggested timing

8 hours

Possible teaching and learning activities

Primary and secondary socialisation

- Teachers should begin by defining socialisation as ‘the lifelong process through which individuals internalise the norms, values and expectations of society’.
- It would be helpful to emphasise the concept of *internalisation* - that social norms become part of an individual’s sense of self rather than simply being externally imposed.
- Teachers could introduce primary socialisation as occurring mainly within the family in early childhood and secondary socialisation as occurring through wider institutions such as education, peer groups and media.
- A life-course activity could be used in which students map key stages in their own development and identify the agencies involved at each stage.
- Teachers should draw attention to the fact that socialisation is ongoing and may change across the life course (e.g. entering employment, migration, religious conversion).
- A short 4-mark practice question could be used to consolidate the distinction between primary and secondary socialisation.

Agencies of socialisation

- Each agency should be explored conceptually and comparatively.

Family

- Teachers should explore the family as the primary agent of socialisation, transmitting language, norms, values and cultural expectations.
- Attention could be given to:
 - Gender role socialisation (e.g. expectations around masculinity and femininity).
 - Social class transmission (e.g. aspirations, educational expectations).
 - Religious and cultural traditions.

- Teachers could encourage students to consider variation across societies and family structures.
- Functionalist interpretation:
 - Socialisation into shared values promoting social integration.
 - Link to Durkheim (collective conscience) and Parsons (bridge between family and wider society).
- Marxist interpretation:
 - Family as reproducing class inequality.
 - Transmission of ruling-class ideology.
- Feminist interpretation:
 - Family as site of patriarchal socialisation.
- Teachers could use a comparative grid requiring students to summarise how each perspective interprets family socialisation.
- An 8-mark explanation could be set: “Explain how the family acts as an agency of socialisation.”

Education

- Teachers should examine how education transmits norms such as punctuality, obedience, competition and achievement.
- The concept of the ‘hidden curriculum’ should be introduced clearly.
- Functionalist view:
 - Role allocation.
 - Meritocracy.
- Marxist view:
 - Correspondence principle.
 - Ideological state apparatus (Althusser).
- Feminist critique:
 - Gendered subject choices and expectations.
- Teachers could ask students to identify examples of hidden curriculum within their own educational experiences.
- A structured comparison activity between family and education could reinforce analytical depth.
- Short 4-mark question on education as an agency.

Peer group

- Teachers should define peer group carefully and explore its influence during adolescence.
- Emphasise identity formation and conformity.
- Interactionist perspective:
 - Symbolic interaction.
 - Looking-glass self (Cooley).
 - Role-taking (Mead).
- Teachers could facilitate discussion around peer pressure and resistance.
- Students could write a short paragraph explaining how peer groups may challenge primary socialisation.

Mass media

- Teachers should examine the media as a significant secondary agent of socialisation.
- Explore representation, stereotypes and consumer culture.
- Marxist perspective:
 - Media as ideological apparatus reinforcing dominant values.
- Interactionist perspective:
 - Audience interpretation and negotiated meanings.
- Teachers could provide short extracts for analysis.
- An 8-mark explanation could be modelled.

Religion

- Teachers should explore religion as transmitting moral codes and behavioural norms.
- Functionalist interpretation:
 - Religion promoting social solidarity.
- Marxist interpretation:
 - Religion as ideological control.
- Feminist critique:
 - Religion reinforcing patriarchal norms.
- Encourage cross-cultural examples.
- Students could produce a short evaluative paragraph.

Formal and informal social control

- Teachers should define informal social control as regulation through norms, expectations and informal sanctions.
- Define formal social control as regulation through law and state institutions.
- Explicitly link socialisation to social control — effective socialisation reduces need for coercion.
- Introduce the concept of the repressive state apparatus in relation to Marxism.
- Teachers could ask students to map each agency to mechanisms of informal control.
- A short 8-mark explanation could be used: “Explain how socialisation contributes to social control.”

Sociological perspectives on socialisation: functionalist; Marxist; feminist; social action/interactionist.

- Teachers should make clear that this section moves from describing agencies of socialisation to interpreting them theoretically. Students should understand that perspectives offer different explanations of the nature and role of socialisation, which is directly relevant to the 20-mark question

Functionalist perspective on socialisation

- Teachers should explain that functionalists view socialisation as necessary for social order and stability. It ensures value consensus and promotes social integration.
- Durkheim’s concept of the collective conscience should be used to explain how shared norms bind individuals together.
- Parsons’ distinction between particularistic values (family) and universalistic values (education) should be explained to demonstrate how primary and secondary socialisation function differently.
- Teachers could revisit earlier examples (family transmission of norms; education promoting achievement) and ask students to reinterpret them from a functionalist perspective.
- A short structured activity could involve students identifying three ways in which socialisation promotes cohesion in their society, followed by whole-class discussion.
- Teachers should encourage students to question whether value consensus genuinely exists in multicultural societies.
- Evaluation could be embedded by asking:
 - Does functionalism underestimate conflict?
 - Does it ignore inequality and power?
- Students could produce a developed paragraph evaluating the strengths and limitations of the functionalist view.

Marxist perspective on socialisation

- Teachers should contrast this directly with functionalism, emphasising that Marxists see socialisation as reproducing inequality rather than promoting consensus.
- The concept of the ideological state apparatus (Althusser) should be introduced, particularly in relation to education and media.

- The correspondence principle should be explained as demonstrating how school mirrors workplace hierarchy.
- Teachers could ask students to revisit hidden curriculum examples and reinterpret them from a Marxist perspective.
- A structured comparison activity could involve students listing how education might benefit ruling-class interests.
- Teachers should draw attention to the concept of false consciousness and ask students to consider whether individuals always recognise ideological influence.
- Evaluation could be embedded through discussion of:
 - Economic determinism.
 - Evidence of resistance.
 - Whether modern societies are more pluralistic than Marxism suggests.
- Students could complete a short comparison paragraph contrasting Marxist and functionalist explanations of socialisation.

Feminist perspective on socialisation

- Teachers should emphasise that feminist perspectives focus on how socialisation reproduces gender inequality.
- Gender role socialisation within the family should be examined, alongside reinforcement through education, media and religion.
- Teachers could ask students to identify examples of gendered expectations in subject choice, career aspirations or media representation.
- A short stimulus (e.g. advertising slogan or textbook example) could be analysed from a feminist perspective to identify underlying assumptions.
- Teachers should introduce the idea that patriarchy may be reproduced through everyday practices.
- Evaluation could be embedded by asking:
 - Have gender roles changed significantly?
 - Does feminist theory sufficiently account for class and ethnicity?
- Students could write a developed paragraph evaluating whether socialisation primarily benefits men.

Social action / interactionist perspective on socialisation

- Teachers should introduce interactionism as focusing on micro-level processes and the negotiated nature of socialisation.
- The looking-glass self (Cooley) and role-taking (Mead) should be explained as illustrating how identity develops through interaction.
- Teachers could conduct a short classroom reflection exercise asking students how their behaviour changes across different contexts (family, peers, teachers).
- Students could identify how peer interactions shape identity, reinforcing the idea that socialisation is ongoing and interpretative.
- Teachers should emphasise agency — individuals are not passive recipients of norms.
- Evaluation could be embedded through questioning:
 - Does interactionism neglect structural inequality?
 - Can identity ever be fully separated from structural constraints?
- Students could produce a short comparison paragraph contrasting interactionist and Marxist explanations.

Comparative evaluation and exam integration

- Teachers should guide students in comparing perspectives explicitly rather than studying them in isolation.
- A structured comparative grid could be completed collectively, identifying:
 - View of human nature.
 - Purpose of socialisation.
 - Role of power.

- Key criticisms.
- Teachers should model how to structure a 20-mark response:
 - Functionalist explanation.
 - Marxist counter-argument.
 - Feminist extension.
 - Interactionist critique.
 - Reasoned conclusion.
- Students could draft a timed introduction and one analytical paragraph, focusing on integrating perspectives rather than listing them sequentially.

Weeks Thirteen to Fourteen - Social identities and social change

Specification content

- Individual and collective identities.
- The social construction of identities through socialisation.
- 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; hybrid ethnic identities and diasporas; online identities (in social media and virtual communities); greater consumption and globalisation as influences on identities.

Learning outcomes

Students should:

- Distinguish between individual and collective identity.
- Explain how identities are socially constructed through socialisation.
- Analyse how different social categories shape identity formation.
- Apply structural and interactionist explanations to identity.
- Explain how identities are shaped by social change.
- Evaluate whether identities are becoming more fluid in contemporary society.
- Construct developed responses applying sociological theory to identity.

Suggested timing

8-10 hours

Possible teaching and learning activities

Individual and collective identities

- Identity should be introduced as both personal and social. It involves how individuals see themselves, but also how they are categorised and recognised by others.
- A clear distinction should be made between:
 - Individual identity – biography, personality, lived experience.
 - Collective identity – shared sense of belonging derived from group membership.
- Students could construct an identity wheel including multiple aspects of self. They then consider how different aspects become more or less prominent in different contexts. This makes visible the idea that identity is situational and relational.
- Teachers should develop the idea that:
 - Identities are multiple rather than singular.
 - Some identities are chosen.
 - Some are ascribed.
 - Some may operate as a master status, shaping how other aspects are perceived.
- Structured reflection:
 - Why can identity never be understood purely at the individual level?
 - Encourage students to apply structural examples rather than personal anecdotes.

The social construction of identities through socialisation

- Identities are shaped through interaction, expectation and reinforcement. They are not fixed or purely biological.
- Agencies of socialisation previously studied should now be explicitly applied:

- Family transmitting early gender, class and cultural expectations.
- Education shaping achievement identity and national belonging.
- Peer groups reinforcing youth identity.
- Media circulating ideals of success and attractiveness.
- Religion shaping moral identity.
- A timeline task can deepen understanding:
 - Students map identity development across life stages.
 - Annotate which agency was most influential at each stage.
 - Discussion should emphasise patterned influence rather than randomness.
- At this point, brief application of George Herbert Mead is appropriate:
 - Role-taking.
 - The generalised other.
 - Identity emerging through imagined social judgement.
- It should also be stressed that socialisation does not eliminate agency. Individuals may negotiate or resist expectations.

Social identities based on key categories

- Teachers should emphasise intersection rather than treating categories in isolation.

Age and generation/cohort

- Age refers to life stage, but generation (or cohort) refers to groups shaped by shared historical experience. This distinction matters sociologically.
- Individuals who enter adulthood during economic recession may develop different attitudes toward work, housing and security compared to those who enter during economic expansion. Likewise, those who grow up with digital technology may construct relationships and social interaction differently from earlier cohorts.
- Age identity is also shaped by social expectations. Youth may be associated with experimentation and risk, while older age may be associated with wisdom or decline. These expectations influence how individuals see themselves and how they are treated by institutions.
- Media portrayals of “youth culture” or “the elderly” can reinforce simplified narratives. Attention can be drawn to how such portrayals shape collective perceptions and possibly internalised identities.
- It is important to explore ageism explicitly. Identity in later life may be shaped as much by exclusion from employment or social visibility as by chronological age itself.

Sex and gender

- A clear analytical distinction should be maintained between biological sex and socially constructed gender roles.
- Gender identity is shaped through repeated processes of socialisation. Here it is appropriate to revisit Ann Oakley. Oakley’s work demonstrated how children internalise gender expectations through:
 - Manipulation (encouragement of different behaviours),
 - Canalisation (direction toward gender-typed toys and activities),
 - Verbal appellations (labelling),
 - Different activities.
- These processes help explain why gender identities often appear natural rather than socially produced.
- Expectations surrounding subject choice, career aspiration and emotional expression remain patterned by gender, though these patterns have shifted in recent decades.
- When examining advertising or media representation across different time periods, continuity and change become visible. The language used, the roles assigned and the body ideals promoted often reveal underlying assumptions about masculinity and femininity.

- A deeper question can then be posed: does visible diversity in gender expression indicate structural equality, or are inequalities simply taking new forms?

Race and ethnicity

- Ethnicity involves shared culture, heritage and often language. It is lived and expressed through everyday practice.
- Race is widely understood as socially constructed. Racial categories have changed historically and are not biologically fixed.
- Identity in this context is often shaped by experiences of inclusion, exclusion and stereotyping. Minority status may strengthen collective identity as a source of solidarity.
- The work of Frantz Fanon is particularly relevant. Fanon explored how colonial histories and racial hierarchies shape self-perception. Individuals may internalise dominant representations, influencing both individual and collective identity.
- When examining media representation, attention should be given to recurring narratives, patterns of visibility and the traits emphasised. Repetition of particular portrayals can influence both public perception and identity formation.
- Students should be encouraged to consider whether ethnic identity is freely chosen, externally imposed or negotiated between the two.

Social class

- Class identity extends beyond occupation or income. It is expressed through cultural taste, educational experience, accent, aspiration and lifestyle.
- Economic capital shapes access to resources, but cultural capital shapes confidence, expectations and institutional navigation.
- Subtle indicators — such as vocabulary, domestic setting, clothing or leisure activity — often signal class position without being named explicitly.
- In analysing a media representation, attention can be directed to these details. For example, the setting of a television drama, the speech patterns of characters or the assumptions about ambition often communicate class identity indirectly.
- It is worth questioning whether class identity is declining in significance or whether it has shifted into lifestyle branding and consumption patterns.
- Students should consider how class identity intersects with gender and ethnicity, rather than treating it as a standalone category.

Religion

- Religious identity can provide moral structure, belonging and shared meaning. In some contexts, it shapes daily practice and social networks.
- In societies experiencing secularisation, religious identity may become less dominant, yet it may still function as a powerful minority identity marker.
- Religion often intersects with ethnicity and nationality, creating layered forms of collective identity.
- Attention can be drawn to how religious symbols, dress and ritual practices function as visible markers of belonging.
- Discussion may explore whether religious identity is becoming more individualised in late modern societies, or whether it remains embedded within traditional structures.

Ability and disability

- The distinction between the medical and social models should be introduced clearly. The medical model locates disability within the individual body, whereas the social model highlights structural barriers and societal attitudes.
- Identity in this area is shaped not only by impairment but by access, inclusion and stigma. Physical infrastructure, employment practices and educational provision all influence lived experience.

- When considering public spaces such as schools or transport systems, attention can be drawn to how design choices enable or restrict participation. Structural exclusion can shape identity profoundly.
- Disability identity can also be a source of collective activism and solidarity, demonstrating that marginalisation may generate collective consciousness.

Nationality

- National identity is constructed and reinforced through education, media, political discourse and symbolic ritual.
- School curricula often promote shared historical narratives. National ceremonies, commemorations and sporting events reinforce collective belonging.
- National symbols — flags, anthems, monuments — function as visible markers of unity.
- At the same time, national identity can be exclusionary. Political rhetoric may define who belongs and who does not.
- In increasingly globalised societies, national identity may coexist with transnational or hybrid identities. Students should consider whether national identity is weakening, adapting or intensifying in response to global flows.
- When analysing political speeches or media coverage of national events, attention can be given to language of unity, heritage and boundary-making. Such analysis reveals how collective identity is constructed rhetorically.

Social change and identities

- Identity shifts alongside broader structural transformation.

Gender identities including masculinity and femininity

- Traditional constructions of masculinity emphasised authority and emotional restraint; femininity was linked to care and domesticity.
- Feminist movements, labour market participation and changing family forms have reshaped these expectations.
- Students should evaluate whether visible diversity in gender expression reflects structural equality.

Hybrid ethnic identities and diasporas

- Diaspora refers to dispersed populations maintaining connections to origin.
- Hybrid identities emerge through negotiation between heritage culture and host society.
- Intergenerational differences are often significant.
- Students compare first-generation and second-generation experiences to identify tensions and adaptation.

Online identities (social media and virtual communities)

- Identity in digital spaces is often curated and performed.
- Erving Goffman is directly relevant:
 - Presentation of self.
 - Impression management.
 - Front stage/back stage.
- Shoshana Zuboff can be applied carefully:
 - Platforms extract behavioural data.
 - Algorithms shape visibility.
 - Identity becomes commodified.
- A mock profile analysis allows students to identify what is amplified, edited or concealed.
- Evaluation question:
 - Does online identity increase autonomy, or intensify surveillance and comparison?

Greater consumption and globalisation as influences on identities

- Identity is increasingly expressed through lifestyle and consumption.
- Brands operate as symbolic communication.
- Globalisation produces cultural hybridisation but may also promote homogenisation.
- Students analyse a brand associated with youth identity and discuss whether this represents individual choice or corporate influence.

Consolidation

- Students complete a comparative grid examining:
 - Structure versus agency.
 - Stability versus fluidity.
 - Power and inequality.
 - Digital capitalism.
- Timed evaluative paragraph:
 - “Evaluate the view that identities are increasingly fluid in contemporary society.”
 - Students must integrate at least two structural categories and one element of social change.

Weeks Fifteen to Sixteen - Social control

Specification content

- Formal and informal social control.
- Sanctions, both positive and negative.
- Consensus and conflict views of social control.
- Stigmatised identities; othering.
- Agencies of informal social control: families; schools; peers; media; religion; workplace.
- Agencies of formal social control: government/laws; police and other enforcement agencies; criminal justice system.
- Aims and types of punishment.
- Crime prevention: types of policing, surveillance.
- Repressive and ideological state apparatuses, interpellation; hegemony.
- Sociological perspectives on social control: functionalist; Marxist; feminist; social action/interactionist.

Learning outcomes

Students should:

- Define social control and distinguish clearly between formal and informal social control, using precise examples.
- Distinguish between positive and negative sanctions and explain how sanctions regulate behaviour in different contexts.
- Explain consensus and conflict approaches to social control and apply each to a contemporary example.
- Explain how stigma and othering produce stigmatised identities and shape life chances, including patterns of inclusion and exclusion.
- Analyse how informal agencies (family, school, peers, media, religion, workplace) promote conformity through everyday routines, expectations and rewards.
- Analyse how formal agencies (government/laws, police, criminal justice system) create, enforce and punish deviance.
- Explain the aims of punishment (for example deterrence, rehabilitation, retribution, incapacitation, restoration) and connect aims to types of punishment.
- Apply sociological ideas to crime prevention, including the role of policing strategies and surveillance technologies.
- Apply Marxist ideas of repressive state apparatuses, ideological state apparatuses, interpellation and hegemony to explain how compliance can be produced without constant force.
- Compare how functionalist, Marxist, feminist and social action/interactionist perspectives explain social control, including strengths and limitations of each.

Suggested timing

8-10 hours

Possible teaching and learning activities

Introducing social control as a core sociological idea

- Reconnect to earlier learning on norms, values and socialisation so students see control as the *maintenance arm* of social order rather than a separate topic.
- Starter: “Invisible rules”
 - Students list 10 everyday behaviours they follow automatically (queuing, eye contact, dress codes, phone use, classroom routines).
 - For each, students identify: *who benefits, who enforces, what happens if it is broken*.
- Build a shared class definition:
 - Social control as the processes and mechanisms that regulate behaviour and maintain conformity.
 - Stress that control operates through ideas, relationships and institutions, not only the law.

Formal and informal social control

- Teach the distinction explicitly with parallel examples:
 - Informal: approval, ridicule, gossip, exclusion, praise, status, shame.
 - Formal: rules, laws, fines, detention, arrest, prosecution, sentencing.
- Card sort (paired):
 - Provide 20 scenario cards (school, workplace, family, online spaces, public spaces).
 - Students sort into formal, informal or “mixed/grey area” and must justify the “mixed” pile using clear reasoning.
- Mini-plenary retrieval:
 - “Define formal control in one sentence.”
 - “Give one example and explain why it is formal rather than informal.”

Sanctions: positive and negative

- Teach sanctions as outcomes (reward or punishment) that shape behaviour, including how sanctions can be subtle and culturally specific.
- Quick grid activity:
 - Rows: family, school, peers, media, workplace, religion, police, courts.
 - Columns: positive sanction, negative sanction.
 - Students fill with one example each, then add a brief note: *how does this encourage conformity?*
- Stretch and challenge prompt:
 - “Can a sanction be positive for one group but negative for another?”
 - Use an example such as strict uniform enforcement, workplace monitoring or public shaming online.

Consensus and conflict views of social control

- Consensus (functionalist) line of argument:
 - Social control maintains social integration, shared values and predictability.
 - Punishment can reaffirm boundaries and reinforce moral consensus.
- Conflict (power-based) line of argument:
 - Social control can reflect unequal power, prioritising the interests of dominant groups.
 - Laws may protect property and privilege, and enforcement may be experienced unevenly.
- Comparative writing task (structured):
 - Students write two short paragraphs on the same example (for example school exclusion policy, protest policing, stop and search, workplace surveillance):

- Paragraph A: explain using consensus reasoning
- Paragraph B: explain using conflict reasoning
- Add a final judgement sentence: “Which explanation is more convincing here, and why?”

Stigmatised identities and othering

- Clarify concepts:
 - Stigma as a spoiled or discredited identity in social interaction.
 - Othering as constructing a group as different, inferior, threatening or deviant.
- Safe case-study approach (avoid personal disclosure, keep sociological focus):
 - Provide anonymised short vignettes (for example “young male in a hoodie in a shopping centre”, “single mother at parents’ evening”, “migrant worker in shared housing”, “religious minority student with visible symbols”).
 - Students identify:
 - who is being othered
 - what stereotypes are operating
 - what consequences may follow (exclusion, surveillance, reduced opportunities, self-fulfilling effects).
- Link forward explicitly:
 - Stigma and othering as mechanisms that can *justify* tougher control and make unequal treatment feel “normal”.

Agencies of informal social control

- Families
 - Explore how families regulate behaviour through routines, expectations, emotional approval, discipline and internalised conscience.
 - Embedded task: students design a “family rule” and identify the sanction system that sustains it, then evaluate whether it socialises or controls.
- Schools
 - Connect to hidden curriculum and routine compliance: punctuality, uniforms, surveillance, reward systems, streaming and authority.
 - Micro-observation activity: students walk the site (or use photos of spaces) and label “control features” (signage, CCTV, corridors, staff presence, behaviour policy language).
- Peers
 - Explain peer pressure as a control mechanism through belonging, status, ridicule, reinforcement of gender norms and risk behaviour.
 - “Status auction” discussion: what behaviours increase or decrease status in different peer groups?
- Media
 - Teach media as informal control via representations of deviance, moral panics, normalisation of lifestyles and “common sense” narratives about crime and punishment.
 - Analysis task: students annotate a headline set, identifying implied deviance, blame and the preferred solution.
- Religion
 - Explore moral codes, community surveillance, sanctions linked to belonging, shame and honour.
 - Comparative element: how might religious control vary across societies and within different traditions?
- Workplace
 - Explain hierarchy, disciplinary systems, performance management and professional norms as control.
 - Applied example: how do uniforms, timekeeping systems or productivity targets regulate behaviour?

Agencies of formal social control (process, not a list)

- Teach the chain as a process students can narrate:
 - law-making → policing/enforcement → charging → courts → sentencing → punishment → post-sentence control.
- Sequencing activity:
 - Students assemble the process and annotate where discretion operates (police discretion, CPS decisions, sentencing guidelines).
- Application prompt:
 - “Where might bias enter the process even without explicitly biased laws?”
 - Students generate mechanisms: stereotypes, selective enforcement, unequal legal resources.

Aims and types of punishment

- Teach aims clearly and connect to types:
 - Deterrence (general and specific) → fines, custodial sentences, publicity campaigns
 - Rehabilitation → education programmes, therapy, restorative approaches
 - Retribution → proportional punishment, ‘just deserts’
 - Incapacitation → imprisonment, restrictions, monitoring
 - Restoration → restorative justice, reparations
- Matching task:
 - Give sentencing examples and students match the likely aim, then debate whether the stated aim matches the real outcome.
- Evaluation prompt:
 - “Which aim dominates in your society’s public debate, and why?”
 - Encourage links back to consensus vs conflict viewpoints.

Crime prevention: types of policing and surveillance

- Policing types:
 - Visible patrols, community policing, intelligence-led policing, zero tolerance approaches, problem-oriented policing.
- Surveillance:
 - CCTV, facial recognition, ANPR, workplace monitoring, platform surveillance, data profiling.
- Classroom ‘policy briefing’ task:
 - Groups produce a one-page plan to reduce a chosen local issue (shoplifting, knife crime, online harassment, vandalism) using:
 - one policing approach
 - one surveillance approach
 - one informal control approach (school or community)
 - They must also add a “risks and ethics” box (privacy, discrimination, trust, effectiveness).

Repressive and ideological state apparatuses, interpellation and hegemony

- Build carefully from concrete to abstract:
 - Start with two columns: control by force vs control by consent.
- Teach the concepts with anchored examples:
 - Repressive state apparatuses: police, courts, prisons (coercion, threat of force).
 - Ideological state apparatuses: education, media, religion, family (shaping beliefs and ‘normality’).
 - Interpellation: how individuals are “hailed” into roles/identities (student, citizen, worker, ‘law-abiding person’) and begin to self-regulate.
 - Hegemony: dominant ideas become common sense so inequality and authority feel legitimate.
- “Spot the ideology” activity:

- Students analyse a short set of extracts (school mission statement, political speech excerpt, news framing, workplace code of conduct) and identify:
 - the values being promoted
 - the identity being encouraged
 - how consent is produced.
- Higher-attainer extension:
 - Students explain how hegemony can reduce the need for overt repression, then apply to a real example (for example workplace productivity culture or national identity narratives).

Sociological perspectives on social control (integrated comparison, not isolated theory)

- Functionalist
 - Emphasise stability, social cohesion, value consensus and the role of sanctions in maintaining order.
 - Task: explain how punishment could reinforce shared values, then critique: “Who decides the shared values?”
- Marxist
 - Emphasise class power, protection of property, state institutions serving dominant economic interests.
 - Task: apply ISA/RSA and hegemony to one institution students know well (school, media, workplace).
- Feminist
 - Emphasise gendered control: regulation of women’s behaviour, sexuality, appearance and safety, and how institutions respond to violence and harm.
 - Task: students identify informal controls placed on girls versus boys in school norms, then link to wider patriarchal expectations.
- Social action/interactionist
 - Emphasise meaning, labelling, negotiation, identity management and the micro-level production of “deviance”.
 - Task: students rewrite a deviance scenario twice: once from the viewpoint of an authority figure, once from the labelled person, to show how meaning shapes outcomes.

Consolidation and exam preparation (built in, not bolted on)

- Retrieval routine (5 minutes each lesson):
 - 5 key terms, 1 application question, 1 comparison question.
- 8-mark practice (AO1/AO2 blend):
 - Example: “Explain how informal social control in schools can encourage conformity.”
 - Students plan with a checklist: definition, two mechanisms, applied examples, mini-judgement.
- 20-mark planning sprint:
 - Students complete a comparative plan grid:
 - consensus vs conflict
 - repression vs ideology
 - structure vs interaction
 - perspective strengths and limitations
 - Then write one developed paragraph with explicit evaluation.

Weeks Seventeen to Eighteen - Deviance, harm and crime

Specification content

- Social construction of crime and deviance, including the differences between societies and over time.
- Types of crimes and examples of them: violent crimes; property crimes; white collar crimes; corporate crimes; state crimes; green/environmental crimes; 'victimless' crimes; cybercrimes.
- Social harms, including examples of actions which cause harm but are not considered as crimes.
- Issues in measuring and researching crime and deviance including official/police statistics, self-report studies and victim surveys.
- Patterns of offending and victimisation by: gender; social class; age; ethnicity.

Learning outcomes

Students should:

- Define crime and deviance accurately and distinguish between them.
- Explain what is meant by the social construction of crime.
- Analyse how definitions of crime vary across societies and over time.
- Identify and explain different types of crime using relevant examples.
- Distinguish between crimes committed by individuals and crimes committed by powerful actors.
- Explain what is meant by social harm and distinguish harm from crime.
- Evaluate why some harmful acts are not criminalised.
- Explain how crime is measured using official statistics, victim surveys and self-report studies.
- Evaluate strengths and limitations of different methods of measuring crime.
- Identify patterns of offending and victimisation by gender, social class, age and ethnicity.
- Suggest sociological explanations for patterns in crime statistics.
- Apply functionalist, Marxist, feminist and interactionist perspectives to crime and deviance.
- Construct developed written responses for 4, 8 and 20 mark questions on crime and deviance.

Suggested timing

8-10 hours

Possible teaching and learning activities

The social construction of crime and deviance

- Teachers should begin this section by deliberately unsettling common-sense assumptions. Rather than defining crime immediately, students should first be asked to write down what they believe counts as a crime and why. Responses can then be collected and compared, allowing misconceptions to surface naturally.
- Once initial ideas are shared, teachers should introduce three distinct concepts carefully and visually:
 - Crime as behaviour that violates formal law.
 - Deviance as behaviour that violates social norms or expectations.
 - Social harm as behaviour that causes damage, whether or not it is illegal.

- A simple overlapping diagram is helpful here, as students often assume the three are interchangeable.
- The idea of social construction should be introduced through examples rather than abstract language. Teachers might explain that laws are made through political processes. Laws may reflect dominant values at particular moments in time and that they can change when social attitudes shift.
- A structured classification activity is particularly effective at this stage. Students could be given a set of behaviours including assisted dying, cannabis use, insider trading, historical criminalisation of homosexuality, tax avoidance and environmental pollution. They should categorise each behaviour individually before discussing in pairs. The key learning point is not the “correct” answer but the areas of disagreement.
- Teachers should explicitly clarify that describing crime as socially constructed does not mean that harm is imaginary. Violence produces real suffering. The argument instead focuses on how behaviours are defined, labelled and responded to.
- A short historical case study should then be introduced. Students might examine how one behaviour moved from criminal to legal status. Teachers should guide students to identify:
 - Changes in public attitudes.
 - The role of activism or protest.
 - The role of media.
 - The role of government decision-making.
 - Who benefited from legal change.
- At this point, it is useful to draw briefly on the work of Howard Becker to reinforce the idea that deviance is not inherent in an act but emerges through social reaction. This should not be re-taught in full if already covered, but applied directly to crime definitions.
- Students should then complete a short written task:
 - Outline two reasons why definitions of crime change over time.
 - Teachers should model the first paragraph to demonstrate expected depth.

Types of crime

- Teachers should make clear that this section is about more than memorising categories. It is about analysing which crimes are visible, which are prioritised and which are marginalised.
- Begin with a short brainstorm: “What crimes are most serious in society?” Record responses. Most students will focus on violent street crime. This assumption becomes a reference point for later discussion.

Violent crime

- Violent crimes such as assault, robbery and homicide are highly visible and emotionally charged. They often dominate media coverage and political debate. As a result, they shape public perceptions of crime disproportionately.
- Teachers should encourage students to consider why violent crime generates fear more easily than financial crime, even when financial harm may be greater in scale.
- At this stage, reference can be made to Stanley Cohen and the concept of moral panic. Students should analyse how media amplification can create heightened perceptions of threat.
- An embedded activity could involve analysing headlines and identifying emotive language. Students should be encouraged to consider how reporting style influences public perception.

Property crime

- Property crimes, including theft and burglary, are central within legal systems that prioritise private ownership. Protection of property is historically linked to the development of capitalist societies.
- Teachers should encourage students to reflect on why theft often results in imprisonment, whereas corporate environmental damage may result only in fines.

- A brief link can be made to Karl Marx in relation to property relations and the protection of economic interests.
- A short writing exercise could ask students to explain why property crime is treated seriously within capitalist societies.

White collar crime

- The term white collar crime was developed by Edwin Sutherland to describe crimes committed within occupational contexts.
- These crimes include fraud, insider trading and embezzlement. They are often complex and may involve significant financial harm. However, they may not generate the same public outrage as street crime.
- Teachers should lead a structured comparison between street robbery and insider trading, asking students to consider:
 - Who is harmed?
 - How visible is the crime?
 - How is it punished?
 - How is it reported?

Corporate and state crime

- Corporate crime refers to illegal or harmful actions committed by companies. Harm may be diffuse and long-term, affecting communities or environments rather than identifiable individuals.
- State crime involves harmful or illegal actions committed by governments. These may include corruption or human rights abuses.
- Teachers should guide students to think carefully about accountability:
 - Who investigates powerful institutions?
 - Why might prosecution be rare?
 - How does power influence enforcement?
- A structured task could involve students examining two brief case summaries (one corporate, one street crime) and comparing likely consequences.

Green and cyber crime

- Green crime includes environmental harm such as pollution and wildlife trafficking. These crimes often have global dimensions and complex enforcement challenges.
- Cybercrime includes identity theft and online fraud. It raises questions about jurisdiction, surveillance and digital regulation.
- Teachers should encourage students to consider how globalisation complicates traditional definitions of crime and enforcement boundaries.

Drawing the section together

- Return to the initial brainstorm of “serious crime”.
- Ask students whether their view has changed.
- Encourage reflection on visibility versus harm.
- Set an 8-mark question:
 - Explain one reason why crimes of the powerful may be treated differently from street crime.
- Teachers should model a response that includes explanation and evaluation.

Social harm

- Teachers should now build on earlier distinctions between crime and harm. Emphasise that some behaviours may cause significant damage without being criminalised.
- Provide clear examples of legal but harmful practices. Avoid emotive framing; focus on structural harm.
- Students should categorise examples into harmful/illegal and harmful/legal, then explain why the distinction exists.

- Encourage discussion of economic and political influence in shaping law.
- A structured debate works well here, with students required to support arguments using sociological reasoning rather than opinion.

Measuring crime

- Teachers should begin by asking how crime trends are known. This encourages students to think methodologically.
- Official statistics should be explained carefully, including:
 - Reporting behaviour.
 - Recording practices.
 - Policing priorities.
- Victim surveys and self-report studies could be compared explicitly. Students should complete a structured comparison table including strengths and limitations.
- Introduce the concept of the dark figure of crime clearly and revisit earlier examples.
- Provide a short dataset for interpretation. Students should:
 - Identify the pattern.
 - Suggest two limitations.
 - Offer one alternative explanation.

Patterns of offending and victimisation

- Teachers should begin this section with data rather than explanation. Students should first be shown a simplified table or graph illustrating patterns of offending by gender, social class, age and ethnicity.
- Students should be asked to *describe* patterns before attempting to explain them. This distinction should be reinforced explicitly, as students often move prematurely into causal claims.
- Once patterns are identified, teachers should emphasise a key analytical point:
 - Statistics show patterns.
 - They do not automatically explain causes.
 - Recorded crime reflects behaviour and enforcement practices.

Gender

- Recorded crime statistics consistently show that males are significantly more likely than females to be convicted of most offences, particularly violent crime.
- Teachers should carefully unpack possible explanations rather than presenting a single account:
 - Socialisation explanations
 - Boys may be encouraged to be competitive, assertive or risk-taking.
 - Girls may be socialised into compliance and relational behaviour.
 - Teachers should link back to earlier work on gender identity formation rather than re-teach it.
 - Masculinity explanations
 - Some sociologists argue crime can function as a way of demonstrating masculinity.
 - Students should consider whether certain crimes (for example violent offences) are tied to performance of status.
 - Opportunity explanations
 - Men historically occupy more public and occupational roles, increasing opportunity for certain offences (including white collar crime).
 - Control explanations
 - Women may experience greater informal social control through family and community expectations.
- Teachers should then complicate the picture:
 - Female crime rates have changed over time.

- Under-reporting of certain crimes (for example domestic abuse) may distort patterns.
 - Sentencing practices may differ by gender.
- Structured classroom activity:
 - Provide two short explanations for gender patterns (one socialisation-based, one enforcement-based).
 - Students evaluate strengths and limitations of each.
- 8-mark opportunity:
 - Explain one sociological reason why men are over-represented in crime statistics.

Social class

- Official statistics show over-representation of working-class individuals in prison populations.
- Teachers should handle this carefully to avoid simplistic interpretations. Emphasise that this does not mean “working-class people are more criminal” — rather, it requires sociological explanation.
- Possible explanations to explore:
 - Material deprivation
 - Economic marginalisation may increase likelihood of property crime.
 - Limited legitimate opportunities may shape choices.
 - Selective enforcement
 - Working-class areas may be more heavily policed.
 - Middle-class offences may be less visible or treated differently.
 - White collar crime invisibility
 - Financial crimes committed by middle-class professionals may not appear in conventional crime statistics.
 - Labelling processes
 - Once labelled, individuals may be more likely to be monitored and criminalised.
- Teachers should draw explicit connections to earlier Marxist perspectives without re-teaching them in full.
- Embedded comparative task:
 - Students compare:
 - Shoplifting.
 - Corporate tax fraud.
 - Identify:
 - Visibility.
 - Likelihood of prosecution.
 - Public perception.
- Analytical prompt:
 - Do crime statistics reflect criminal behaviour or criminalisation?
- Written task:
 - Explain one reason why working-class individuals are over-represented in prison statistics.

Age

- Crime statistics show a clear age pattern, with offending peaking in late adolescence and early adulthood.
- Teachers should guide students to explore multiple explanations:
 - Peer influence
 - Youth culture and group dynamics.
 - Desire for status within peer groups.
 - Transition to adulthood
 - Identity experimentation.
 - Reduced supervision compared to childhood.

- Visibility
 - Young people more likely to spend time in public spaces.
 - Increased police contact.
- Maturity and life-course
 - Offending tends to decline with age as social bonds strengthen (employment, relationships).
- Encourage students to reflect:
 - Is youth crime increasing, or are perceptions shaped by media coverage?
- Activity:
 - Students examine a graph of age-crime curve.
 - Identify peak.
 - Suggest two possible explanations.
 - Evaluate which is most convincing.

Ethnicity

- Teachers should approach this section carefully and sensitively.
- Official statistics in some contexts show disproportionate representation of certain ethnic minority groups in stop and search, arrest and imprisonment rates.
- Teachers should explicitly distinguish between:
 - Recorded crime.
 - Policing patterns.
 - Sentencing patterns.
- Possible explanations to explore:
 - Socioeconomic inequality
 - Disadvantage may shape exposure to certain risks.
 - Selective policing
 - Over-policing in certain areas.
 - Stop and search practices.
 - Labelling and stereotyping
 - Stereotypes may influence police suspicion.
 - Self-fulfilling prophecy processes.
 - Under-reporting in some communities
 - Cultural mistrust of police.
- Teachers should emphasise:
 - Statistics are contested.
 - Explanations must be evidence-based.
 - Avoid essentialist interpretations.
- Structured evaluation activity:
 - Students are given two explanations (one behavioural, one enforcement-based).
 - They must evaluate both and identify strengths and weaknesses.
- 8-mark practice:
 - Explain one reason why certain ethnic groups may appear over-represented in official crime statistics.

Bringing patterns together

- Teachers should now encourage students to synthesise across categories:
 - Are patterns best explained by structure, socialisation, labelling or enforcement?
 - Do patterns overlap (for example young working-class males)?
- Comparative grid task:
 - Category
 - Behaviour explanation
 - Enforcement explanation
 - Evaluation
- Students complete grid collaboratively before writing independently.
- Final evaluative paragraph task:

- “To what extent do crime statistics reflect patterns of behaviour rather than patterns of policing?”
- This prepares students directly for 20-mark evaluation.

Weeks Nineteen to Twenty – Research methods: Approaches to research

Specification content

- Quantitative and qualitative evidence and data
- Primary and secondary sources and data
- Positivist approaches
- Interpretivist approaches

Learning outcomes

Students should:

- Distinguish clearly between quantitative and qualitative data.
- Explain strengths and limitations of different types of data.
- Identify and apply the distinction between primary and secondary sources.
- Explain the assumptions underpinning positivist and interpretivist approaches.
- Compare approaches and justify why one may be more appropriate for particular research topics.

Suggested timing

6-8 hours

Possible teaching and learning activities

Quantitative and qualitative evidence and data

- Begin by introducing students to the idea that sociologists do not all study society in the same way. Present a broad social issue such as family change, educational achievement or youth crime. Ask students how we might find out about it. As responses are gathered, categorise them into “numbers” and “words” to make visible the early divide in research thinking.
- Teach the distinction carefully and explicitly:
 - quantitative data as numerical data, statistics, measurements, patterns and trends
 - qualitative data as words, meanings, experiences, accounts and interpretations
- Use short contrasting extracts:
 - a simple statistical table showing trends (for example birth rates over time)
 - a short interview extract about experiences of parenting
 - Students should identify the type of data and explain what kind of conclusions can be drawn from each. Push them further by asking what cannot be concluded. This strengthens early evaluation.
- Develop conceptual depth by asking:
 - Which type of data allows generalisation?
 - Which type allows depth of understanding?
 - Can numbers ever fully explain behaviour?
 - Can words ever represent wider society?
- Introduce key evaluative vocabulary early: reliability, validity, representativeness. These should not yet be fully developed but should begin to appear in discussion so that students see links forward.
- Students could complete a short written comparison paragraph:
“Explain one difference between quantitative and qualitative data.”
This supports precision for 2 and 4 mark questions.

Primary and secondary sources and data

- Introduce primary data as data collected first-hand by a sociologist for a specific purpose. Emphasise intention and design.
- Introduce secondary data as data that already exists and was collected by someone else, possibly for a different purpose.
- Provide brief research scenarios. For example:
 - A sociologist interviews 20 parents about homework routines.
 - A sociologist analyses government census data.
 - A sociologist studies archived letters from migrants.
 - Students decide whether each is primary or secondary and justify their answer.
- Develop further depth by introducing the idea that:
 - Secondary data may have been collected using methods the current researcher cannot control.
 - Primary data may allow tailored questions but may be limited by time and cost.
- Encourage application thinking:
 - Which would be more useful for studying long-term demographic change?
 - Which would be more useful for understanding emotional experiences of divorce?
- Link forward to later specification areas (such as official statistics and qualitative documents) so students see this as foundational knowledge rather than isolated terminology.
- Practise short definition writing:
 - Define primary data.
 - Define secondary data.Emphasise concise, precise answers suitable for 2-mark questions.

Positivist approaches

- Introduce positivism as the belief that society can and should be studied scientifically. Emphasise objectivity, measurement and the search for patterns.
- Clarify key assumptions:
 - social facts exist independently of individuals
 - behaviour can be measured
 - cause-and-effect relationships can be identified
 - large-scale research increases reliability
- Use familiar examples such as official statistics, large surveys and national data sets to illustrate how positivism operates in practice.
- Ask students to consider:
 - Why might governments prefer positivist research?
 - Why is identifying patterns useful for policy making?
- Introduce the idea that positivists prioritise reliability and generalisability. Begin to contrast this with validity.
- Provide a mini research design task:
 - “Design a positivist study of school attendance.”
Students outline sample size, type of data and expected outcomes.
- Build early critical thinking:
 - Can researchers ever be fully objective?
 - Does measuring behaviour explain why it happens?
 - Students should be encouraged to respond in short evaluative paragraphs.

Interpretivist approaches

- Introduce interpretivism as the view that society is socially constructed through meanings and interactions. Emphasise that social reality is subjective.
- Clarify key assumptions:
 - individuals attach meanings to actions
 - behaviour cannot be understood without context
 - qualitative methods are often preferred

- understanding (verstehen) is central
- Use everyday examples:
 - Exam results may show achievement levels (quantitative), but interviews may reveal anxiety, pressure or family expectations (qualitative).
Students discuss why both perspectives might matter.
- Encourage students to reflect on situations where understanding feelings or meanings is more important than counting behaviour.
- Provide a small activity:
 - Redesign the earlier positivist school attendance study from an interpretivist perspective.
Students may suggest interviews or participant observation.
- Develop evaluation:
 - Can small-scale research represent wider society?
 - Does deep understanding compensate for limited generalisability?

Developing comparison across approaches

- Construct a comparison grid with headings:
 - View of society
 - Preferred data
 - Aim of research
 - Strengths
 - Limitations
- Present research topics such as:
 - Exam achievement
 - Bullying
 - Family relationships
 - Youth identity

Students decide which approach may be more suitable and justify their reasoning. Require explanation rather than one-word answers.

- Reinforce assessment skills by practising:
 - Define quantitative data (2 marks)
 - Explain one difference between positivist and interpretivist approaches (4 marks style)

Ongoing emphasis

- Throughout this section, consistently emphasise that research approaches shape:
 - the questions sociologists ask
 - the methods they choose
 - the type of data they collect
 - the conclusions they are able to draw
- Students should finish this section understanding that methodology is not just technical choice, but theoretical orientation.

Weeks Twenty One to Twenty Three – Main research methods and their strengths and limitations

Specification content

- Surveys and questionnaires: postal surveys, telephone surveys, online surveys, self-completion surveys
- Types of questions used in surveys
- Interviews of different types: formal/structured interviews, informal/unstructured interviews, group interviews
- Ethnographic approaches, including participant observation
- Covert and overt observation
- Non-participant observation
- Experiments: laboratory experiments and field experiments
- Triangulation
- Longitudinal studies
- Qualitative secondary sources, including diaries, letters and personal documents
- Quantitative secondary sources, including official statistics

Learning outcomes

Students should:

- Describe a range of sociological research methods.
- Explain strengths and limitations of each method.
- Apply key concepts such as validity, reliability and representativeness to specific methods.
- Compare methods and justify their suitability for particular research topics.
- Develop extended evaluative responses in preparation for 20-mark questions.

Suggested timing

8-10 hours

Possible teaching and learning activities

Surveys and questionnaires

- Teach surveys and questionnaires as methods designed to generate standardised data that can be compared across large populations. Emphasise that standardisation is central to their appeal: every respondent answers the same questions in the same format, which increases comparability and reliability.
- Explain different types of surveys, including postal, telephone, online and self-completion surveys. Go beyond description by exploring how technological change has altered research practice, for example:
 - online surveys increasing speed and reach
 - algorithm-driven distribution potentially shaping samples
 - digital exclusion limiting representativeness
- Introduce types of questions used in questionnaires:
 - closed questions (fixed responses)
 - open questions (free response)
 - scaled questions (e.g. Likert scales)
 - Emphasise that question wording, sequencing and framing can influence outcomes.

- Introduce concepts such as leading questions, double-barrelled questions and ambiguous wording to show how validity may be compromised.
- Develop strengths analytically:
 - ability to collect data from large samples, increasing representativeness
 - reliability due to standardisation
 - statistical analysis enabling identification of patterns and correlations
 - potential to inform policy and large-scale decision-making
- Develop limitations with methodological precision:
 - low response rates and non-response bias
 - superficial data lacking contextual depth
 - inability to probe meaning
 - social desirability bias
 - difficulty establishing causation despite identifying correlation
- Students design a short questionnaire on a familiar topic such as study habits. After completion, they critically evaluate:
 - whether their questions would generate valid data
 - whether responses would be honest
 - whether their sample would be representative
- Extend discussion to how surveys underpin official statistics and large-scale social studies. Students consider how media headlines often simplify statistical findings, reinforcing the need for critical interpretation.

Interviews

- Introduce interviews as a method aimed at generating detailed qualitative data, particularly where sociologists seek to understand subjective meanings, motivations and lived experiences.
- Teach structured, unstructured and group interviews, but move beyond definition to methodological implications:
 - structured interviews prioritise reliability and comparability
 - unstructured interviews prioritise depth and validity
 - group interviews may reveal social norms and interactional dynamics
- Compare structured interviews directly with questionnaires, highlighting that although both use predetermined questions, interviews allow clarification and reduce misunderstanding, potentially improving validity.
- Develop strengths conceptually:
 - capacity to probe responses
 - opportunity to explore complex or sensitive issues
 - ability to build rapport and uncover meanings
- Develop limitations in greater depth:
 - interviewer effects shaping responses
 - social desirability influenced by face-to-face interaction
 - time intensity limiting sample size
 - reduced reliability due to variation in questioning
 - power dynamics influencing disclosure
- Use short interview extracts and analyse how the interviewer's wording may have shaped the response. This helps students recognise data as constructed rather than neutral.
- Encourage discussion of why interviews may be particularly useful when researching issues such as domestic labour, identity or discrimination, where closed questions may oversimplify complex experiences.
- Build early evaluative writing by asking:
"Explain why unstructured interviews may produce more valid but less reliable data."

Observations and ethnographic approaches

- Introduce observation as a method focused on actual behaviour rather than reported behaviour. Emphasise the distinction between what people say they do and what they actually do.
- Explain participant observation and non-participant observation, analysing how researcher involvement shapes data. Discuss the trade-off between immersion and detachment.
- Teach overt and covert observation with explicit reference to ethical implications, including informed consent, deception and potential harm. Encourage students to recognise ethical considerations as central methodological issues, not afterthoughts.
- Develop strengths:
 - high validity through naturalistic observation
 - ability to uncover hidden norms and informal rules
 - depth of insight into group culture
- Develop limitations:
 - lack of representativeness
 - limited reliability due to researcher interpretation
 - difficulty recording data without influencing behaviour
 - potential risk to researcher
 - Hawthorne Effect reducing validity in overt research
- Students observe behaviour in a safe setting (e.g. classroom interaction patterns) and then reflect critically on:
 - what was observable
 - what motivations could not be inferred
 - how their presence may have shaped behaviour
- Link to ethnographic research, explaining that long-term immersion may produce exceptionally rich data but raises significant practical and ethical challenges. Encourage students to consider how emotional involvement may blur objectivity.

Experiments

- Introduce experiments as methods designed to identify cause-and-effect relationships through control of variables. Clarify terminology such as independent variable, dependent variable and control group.
- Teach laboratory experiments and field experiments, exploring the tension between control and realism:
 - laboratory experiments maximise control but risk artificiality
 - field experiments increase ecological validity but reduce control
- Develop strengths:
 - capacity to isolate variables
 - clarity in establishing causation
 - replicability in controlled conditions
- Develop limitations analytically:
 - artificial settings reducing validity
 - ethical issues, particularly deception
 - difficulty controlling complex social variables
 - limited generalisability beyond experimental conditions
- Use hypothetical examples (e.g. testing conformity to rules in classroom settings) to demonstrate experimental design without conducting research.
- Encourage critical thinking about why experiments are less common in sociology than in the natural sciences. Students should consider complexity of human behaviour, ethical constraints and the role of meaning.

Triangulation and longitudinal studies

- Introduce triangulation as the strategic use of multiple methods within one study. Emphasise that triangulation is not simply “using two methods”, but an attempt to strengthen validity by cross-checking findings.

- Provide example:
 - a study of school exclusion using official statistics, interviews with teachers and participant observation of classrooms.
 - Students identify how each method compensates for the weaknesses of the others.
- Introduce longitudinal studies as research conducted over extended periods to identify social change.
- Develop strengths:
 - ability to track patterns and transitions
 - insight into long-term processes
 - stronger evidence of causation over time
- Develop limitations:
 - attrition reducing representativeness
 - high cost and funding constraints
 - changing social context affecting consistency
 - difficulty maintaining methodological continuity
- Encourage students to evaluate when longitudinal research is necessary and when cross-sectional research may suffice.

Secondary sources

- Teach qualitative secondary sources such as diaries, letters and personal documents as rich accounts of lived experience. Discuss authenticity, authorship and intended audience.
- Teach quantitative secondary sources such as official statistics, census data and institutional records. Explore how data collection methods shape outcomes.
- Develop strengths:
 - large-scale coverage
 - ability to identify trends over time
 - cost-effective access
 - historical depth
- Develop limitations:
 - political influence over what is measured
 - changes in definitions affecting comparability
 - lack of researcher control
 - risk of misinterpretation
- Use examples of official statistics (education, crime, health) and require students to link strengths and limitations directly to concepts such as reliability and validity.
- Encourage students to consider secondary data as both a starting point for research and as a resource requiring critical scrutiny.
- Applying research methods to exam-style contexts
- Regularly practise applying methods to unfamiliar contexts. Provide short research scenarios and require students to justify method choice using methodological concepts.
- Encourage students to link strengths and limitations explicitly to context, avoiding generic responses. For example:
 - Why might participant observation be more valid in researching subcultures?
 - Why might surveys be more appropriate for national demographic change?
- Build paragraph-level evaluation rather than lists. Students should practise constructing balanced arguments that weigh methodological trade-offs.
- Reinforce terminology continuously so that concepts such as reliability, validity, representativeness, bias and generalisability become natural analytical tools rather than memorised definitions.

Weeks Twenty four to Twenty five – Issues in research

Specification content

- operationalisation of concepts
- sampling: population and sampling frames
- types of sample: random, systematic, quota, multistage, stratified random and snowball
- validity and reliability
- researcher and interviewer bias
- the Hawthorne Effect
- social desirability
- practical issues including time and funding
- ethical issues including informed consent, confidentiality, anonymity and participant wellbeing
- causation and correlation
- representativeness and generalisability

Learning outcomes

Students should:

- understand the practical, ethical and methodological issues sociologists face when conducting research
- be able to explain why different research choices affect the quality of data collected
- apply key research issues such as validity, reliability and representativeness to different methods
- recognise how ethical considerations shape sociological research
- interpret and evaluate research decisions in relation to sociological investigations

Suggested timing

8-10 hours

Possible teaching and learning activities

Operationalisation of concepts

- Begin by explicitly addressing why sociologists cannot directly measure abstract concepts such as bullying, boredom in school, family conflict or educational success. Emphasise that sociological concepts are often theoretical constructs rather than observable facts.
- Introduce operationalisation as the process of translating abstract ideas into measurable indicators. Stress that this is not simply a technical step but an interpretive one — researchers decide what counts as evidence.
- Use familiar examples:
 - Bullying could be operationalised through recorded incidents, peer nominations, self-reports or observed behaviour.
 - Educational success could be measured through exam results, teacher assessments, attendance or progression rates.
 - Encourage students to recognise that each operational definition reflects assumptions about what the concept “really” means.
- Develop sophistication by highlighting:
 - Different operationalisations may produce different findings.
 - Measurement choices may reflect theoretical perspectives.

- Overly narrow definitions may increase reliability but reduce validity.
- Students could be given several concepts from families or education and asked to produce measurable indicators. They must then evaluate which indicators would generate more valid or more reliable data.
- To make this explicit, students could observe a short clip or written scenario and independently count specific behaviours. Comparing results reveals how unclear operational definitions reduce reliability.

Validity and reliability

- Introduce validity as the extent to which research accurately measures what it claims to measure, and reliability as the extent to which findings can be replicated consistently.
- Link explicitly back to operationalisation:
 - Clear definitions improve reliability.
 - Meaningful and context-sensitive measures improve validity.
- Introduce the idea of methodological tension:
 - Structured methods often prioritise reliability.
 - Interpretivist approaches often prioritise validity.
- Encourage students to consider whether maximising one may reduce the other. This moves beyond definition into analytical comparison.
- Use applied contrasts:
 - A standardised questionnaire on family conflict.
 - An in-depth unstructured interview on family conflict.
 - Students explain which would be more valid and which more reliable — and why.
- Push slightly further:
 - Can research ever be perfectly valid?
 - Is reliability always desirable if social contexts constantly change?
 - This introduces reflexive thinking without overwhelming them.

Sampling and sampling frames

- Revisit population and reinforce that sociologists rarely study entire populations due to scale and practicality.
- Introduce sampling frames as the practical mechanism through which samples are drawn, emphasising that they are rarely complete.
- Encourage students to recognise structural exclusions:
 - digital-only sampling frames exclude those without internet access
 - school registers exclude home-educated pupils
 - official records may omit undocumented groups
 - This subtly introduces the idea that research may reproduce social inequalities through sampling decisions.
- Provide research scenarios (teachers, migrant families, young people not in education). Students must propose realistic sampling frames and evaluate likely exclusions.
- Reinforce exam application:
Students should practise explaining not just *what* sampling frame is used, but how it shapes who can and cannot be included.

Types of sampling

- Introduce each sampling method through practical recruitment scenarios rather than abstract definitions.
- After matching methods to examples, require students to justify their reasoning using precise terminology such as probability, representativeness and access.
- Develop deeper comparison:
 - Random sampling increases representativeness but requires a complete sampling frame.
 - Snowball sampling increases access to hidden populations but risks homogeneity.
 - Stratified sampling attempts to reflect known social divisions.

- Encourage students to consider whether representativeness is always necessary. This builds evaluative maturity.
- Link sampling decisions explicitly to research aims. For example:
 - Studying elite families may require purposive or snowball sampling.
 - Studying national education trends may require stratified sampling.

Researcher and interviewer bias

- Explain how researcher expectations, assumptions and identity may shape data collection and interpretation.
- Introduce reflexivity — the idea that researchers must reflect critically on their own influence.
- Use interview examples to demonstrate how subtle wording or tone can influence responses.
- Encourage students to recognise that bias is not always deliberate and cannot always be fully eliminated.
- Discuss strategies to reduce bias:
 - pilot studies
 - standardised interview schedules
 - inter-observer reliability checks
- Develop analytical thinking:
 - Is complete objectivity possible in social research?
 - Do different methodological approaches view researcher involvement differently?

The Hawthorne Effect and social desirability

- Introduce the Hawthorne Effect as behavioural change due to awareness of being observed.
- Encourage students to apply this to overt observation, classroom research and workplace studies.
- Discuss social desirability bias in relation to sensitive topics such as crime, prejudice, domestic labour or substance use.
- Link both explicitly to threats to validity.
- Push slightly further:
 - Might social desirability vary across cultural contexts?
 - Are some methods more vulnerable than others?

Practical issues in research

- Emphasise that research design is often shaped by practical constraints rather than pure theoretical preference.
- Explore time, funding, institutional approval and access through gatekeepers.
- Compare:
 - A large-scale funded national survey.
 - A small-scale student-led qualitative project.
- Encourage reflection on how practical limitations influence what sociology can realistically investigate.
- This subtly introduces sociology as embedded within institutional structures.

Ethical issues in research

- Teach core principles: informed consent, confidentiality, anonymity and protection from harm.
- Present short research scenarios and ask students to identify ethical dilemmas.
- Develop complexity:
 - Covert research may increase validity but violate informed consent.
 - Protecting anonymity may limit detailed reporting.
 - Researching powerful institutions may raise different ethical concerns than researching vulnerable groups.

- Encourage debate on whether ethical constraints sometimes limit sociological knowledge.
- Reinforce that ethics are not merely procedural but shape methodological choices.

Causation and correlation

- Teach correlation as a statistical relationship between variables.
- Teach causation as a direct cause-and-effect relationship.
- Use examples from education or family life to show why correlation does not imply causation.
- Emphasise the complexity of isolating variables in social life.
- Link explicitly to exam data interpretation, encouraging caution in drawing causal conclusions.

Representativeness and generalisability

- Explain representativeness as how accurately a sample reflects the wider population.
- Introduce generalisability as the extent to which findings can be applied beyond the study.
- Compare:
 - A detailed ethnographic study of one school.
 - A national survey of thousands of pupils.
- Encourage students to articulate methodological trade-offs rather than ranking one approach as superior.
- Reinforce that the scope of conclusions must match the scale of the research.

Ongoing emphasis throughout this section:

- Encourage students to apply issues directly to specific methods.
- Reinforce methodological vocabulary in written responses.
- Promote evaluative paragraphs rather than descriptive lists.
- Emphasise that research design reflects theoretical assumptions, ethical frameworks and practical constraints.

Weeks Twenty Six to Twenty Seven – Interpretation of data

Specification content

- how to interpret data from quantitative sources, including tables, charts and graphs
- how to interpret data from qualitative sources, including extracts from field notes and unstructured interviews

Learning outcomes

Students should:

- Accurately identify patterns, trends and relationships in quantitative data.
- Distinguish between description and explanation when interpreting statistics.
- Interpret qualitative extracts by identifying themes, meanings and assumptions.
- Evaluate limitations of data in context.
- Avoid over-interpretation, particularly in relation to causation.
- Apply interpretation skills to unseen material under exam conditions.

Suggested timing

8-10 hours

Possible teaching and learning activities

Introducing interpretation of data in sociology

- Begin by reinforcing a simple but important idea: sociological data does not speak for itself. It has to be read, interpreted and situated. Numbers and words only become meaningful when someone makes sense of them.
- Make the distinction clear between:
 - description (what the data shows),
 - interpretation (what the data suggests),
 - explanation (why this pattern may exist).
- Using something familiar such as crime statistics or school attendance rates works well here. Students can first describe what they see, then move gradually into what the pattern might indicate about inequality, institutional processes or wider social change.
- It helps to show students that interpretation is never neutral. The same dataset can be read differently depending on theoretical assumptions or prior knowledge. Even selecting which pattern is “most important” involves judgement.
- Encourage students to link interpretation explicitly to sociological concepts. Data on exam performance, for example, might connect to ideas about social class, gender, labelling or marketisation. Interpretation becomes stronger when it is conceptually anchored.
- Throughout, insist on evidence-based inference. Students should support every point with a specific figure, category or quotation. Vague comments should be challenged and refined.

Interpreting quantitative data: strengths and limitations

- Teach students how quantitative data is commonly presented — frequency tables, percentages, bar charts, line graphs and cross-national comparisons. Spend time ensuring they can read axes accurately and understand whether data is absolute, relative or cumulative.

- Move beyond simple identification of “highest” and “lowest”. Ask students to look for patterns over time, proportional differences and narrowing or widening gaps. A one-year fluctuation is not the same as a sustained trend.
- Repeated structured practice is essential. For each dataset, students should:
 1. Identify the main pattern.
 2. Support it with precise reference to data.
 3. Compare at least two groups or categories.
 4. Suggest one possible limitation.
- Build in methodological awareness. Where did this data come from? How might the concept have been operationalised? Have definitions changed across time? These questions prevent superficial interpretation.
- Encourage careful language. Instead of stating that “X causes Y”, students should write that “the data suggests a relationship between...” or “one possible explanation may be...”. This reinforces analytical caution.
- Introduce the idea that some apparent changes may reflect shifts in measurement or reporting practices rather than genuine social transformation. This deepens critical reading.
- Students should also be able to recognise what the data does not show. Quantitative sources often reveal scale and distribution, but rarely provide insight into lived experience or motivation.

Interpreting qualitative data: strengths, limitations and representativeness

- When introducing qualitative data, stress that interpretation now focuses on meaning rather than measurement. Here, tone, emphasis and context matter.
- Provide short extracts from interviews or field notes. Ask students to identify recurring themes, emotionally charged language and implicit assumptions. What is being said? What is implied? What might be left unsaid?
- Encourage students to separate evidence from inference. Highlighting specific phrases before drawing conclusions helps prevent over-generalisation.
- Push interpretation slightly further by asking:
 - Whose voice is being represented here?
 - Is this a typical experience or an unusual one?
 - How might the presence of a researcher have shaped this account?
- Make representativeness part of the discussion. A rich, detailed extract may offer high validity, but it does not automatically justify broad conclusions.
- Students should practise short structured responses:
 - Identify one theme in the extract.
 - Explain what it suggests.
 - Suggest one limitation of using this evidence more widely.
- Reinforce that qualitative data can provide depth, nuance and complexity, but it must be interpreted carefully and proportionately.

Comparing and evaluating different types of data

- Provide paired sources — for example, attainment statistics alongside pupil interview extracts. Ask students what each reveals and what each cannot show.
- This often leads naturally into discussion of triangulation. Different types of data can complement each other, strengthening overall conclusions.
- Encourage students to articulate trade-offs rather than ranking methods as simply “better” or “worse”. Quantitative data may offer breadth and comparability. Qualitative data may offer insight and explanation.
- Extend this thinking by asking how different theoretical perspectives might prioritise different types of evidence. A positivist may emphasise statistical patterns, while an interpretivist may prioritise personal accounts.

Applying interpretation skills to exam-style questions

- Interpretation skills need regular rehearsal. Unseen data should become routine rather than intimidating.
- Model a consistent approach:
 1. Read carefully and identify the key pattern.
 2. Support it with precise evidence.
 3. Avoid over-interpretation.
 4. Add evaluation only where required.
- Encourage students to annotate datasets before writing. Noting patterns, possible explanations and limitations helps structure responses.
- Include questions that explicitly require evaluation, such as identifying a limitation of the data or suggesting how it might have been collected.
- Peer assessment using mark schemes can be particularly effective here. Students begin to see how precision and disciplined inference are rewarded.

Ongoing emphasis

- Reinforce throughout that data is produced through research processes. It reflects decisions about sampling, operationalisation and method.
- Encourage disciplined inference — confident, but proportionate.
- Integrate interpretation into other substantive topics rather than teaching it in isolation. The more frequently students practise reading data, the more natural analytical thinking becomes.

Weeks Twenty Eight to Thirty One – Sociological theories and perspectives

Specification content

- Public sociology (Burawoy).
- Values and value freedom.
- Sociology and activism.
- Structure and agency.
- Marxism and neo-Marxisms.
- Feminisms.
- Functionalism and neo-functionalism.
- Symbolic interactionism.
- Postmodernism and postmodernity.

Learning outcomes

Students should:

- Explain what sociological theories and perspectives are, and why they matter.
- Describe and apply key assumptions of major perspectives to sociological issues.
- Compare perspectives, identifying what each focuses on and what it tends to overlook.
- Use perspectives to interpret evidence and reach reasoned judgements.
- Show awareness of debates about objectivity, values, activism and public engagement.
- Use sociological concepts accurately and with confidence in extended responses.

Suggested timing

15 hours

Possible teaching and learning activities

Public sociology (Burawoy)

- Begin by clarifying that sociology can be aimed at different audiences. Some sociology is written primarily for other sociologists, while other sociology is intended to engage the wider public and influence debate.
- Introduce Burawoy's idea of public sociology as a type of sociology that aims to connect sociological knowledge to public issues. Stress the guiding question: what should sociology do, and who is it for?
- A useful way in is to present a current social issue that students recognise, such as unequal education outcomes, family change, youth crime or online surveillance. Ask students what they think sociologists should do with knowledge about these issues: publish, advise governments, campaign, inform public debate, support communities, or remain neutral.
- Develop understanding by contrasting different purposes of sociology. Students could sort statements into categories such as:
 - sociology as research and explanation
 - sociology as critique
 - sociology as practical improvement
 - sociology as public engagement
- Encourage students to consider what makes sociology 'public'. For example:
 - writing accessibly rather than only academically
 - engaging with media and public conversations

- working with communities
 - focusing on issues of public importance
- Build evaluation early. Students consider possible criticisms:
 - does public engagement risk oversimplifying findings?
 - might it encourage bias, or could it make sociology more relevant and accountable?
- Link to exam writing by modelling how a student might use public sociology as a framing idea in an evaluation answer. For instance, a response might argue that sociology should be judged partly on how well it helps societies understand and respond to social problems.

Values and value freedom

- Introduce the idea that sociologists bring values into research, whether consciously or not. Values can shape:
 - what topics are studied
 - what questions are asked
 - what methods are chosen
 - how findings are interpreted
- Teach value freedom as the claim that sociology should remain objective, neutral and detached. Emphasise that value freedom does not necessarily mean sociologists have no values, but that they should aim to prevent values influencing conclusions.
- Students often confuse bias and values. It can help to clarify:
 - having values is unavoidable
 - being biased means allowing values to distort evidence or analysis
- Use a simple activity: provide short research proposals on topics like poverty, education policy, domestic labour or crime. Students identify where values might influence decisions. This makes the idea concrete.
- Develop sophistication by exploring the tension between:
 - sociologists as observers describing society
 - sociologists as critics challenging inequality and injustice
- Encourage careful language: students should be able to explain why value freedom may be seen as important for credibility, but also why complete value freedom may be unrealistic.
- Build mini judgement practice:
 - To what extent is value freedom possible in sociology?
Students can develop one argument that it is necessary and one that it is impossible, then decide which is more convincing.

Sociology and activism

- Introduce sociology and activism as a debate about whether sociologists should take action based on their findings, for example campaigning, influencing policy or supporting social movements.
- This works well through accessible dilemmas. Present students with a scenario:
 - A sociologist studies domestic abuse and finds strong evidence that certain policies reduce harm. Should they campaign publicly, advise government privately, or publish neutrally and step back?
- Encourage students to recognise a spectrum of involvement rather than a simple yes or no:
 - neutral researcher
 - public educator
 - policy advisor
 - campaigner or activist
- Develop evaluation through advantages and disadvantages:
 - activism may increase social impact and relevance
 - activism may reduce perceptions of objectivity
 - activism may make research funding or access harder

- activism may also raise ethical questions about responsibility and harm
- Draw links back to public sociology. Students can be guided to see that public sociology and activism overlap but are not identical. Public sociology focuses on engagement, while activism involves deliberate action to create change.
- Students could practise writing a short evaluative paragraph that includes a balanced judgement:
 - sociology can inform activism while still maintaining academic standards, but the risk is that conclusions become shaped by political goals.

Structure and agency

- Teach structure as the patterned social forces that shape behaviour, such as class systems, gender norms, institutions, laws and economic systems.
- Teach agency as the ability of individuals to make choices and act independently. Emphasise that agency does not mean total freedom. It operates within constraints.
- Use quick everyday examples:
 - educational choices shaped by school policies and family resources
 - gender expectations shaping domestic roles
 - peer pressure influencing identity and behaviour
- Students could categorise explanations as more structural or more agency-focused, then discuss which they find more convincing and why.
- Develop the key point that many sociological debates are really debates about how far structure or agency matters more. Encourage students to spot this in different perspectives:
 - Marxism often emphasises structure
 - interactionism often emphasises agency
 - functionalism tends to emphasise social structure and socialisation
 - postmodernism challenges fixed structures and highlights fluid identities
- Use a 'two-lens' task. Give a scenario such as underachievement in school, rising divorce or youth crime. Students produce:
 - one structural explanation
 - one agency explanationand then evaluate how far each works.
- Build sophistication by introducing the idea that structure and agency interact. Students should be encouraged to explain that individuals make choices, but choices are shaped by opportunities, constraints and socialisation.

Marxism and neo-Marxisms

- Introduce Marxism as a conflict perspective focused on class inequality, capitalism and power. Stress core assumptions:
 - society is divided by unequal ownership and control of resources
 - institutions often reproduce inequality
 - ideas can be used to justify and maintain power
- Make the approach tangible by linking to familiar institutions:
 - education as preparing people for work roles
 - media as shaping ideology
 - law and punishment as protecting property and control
- Encourage students to identify Marxist concepts that can recur across topics, such as:
 - ideology
 - exploitation
 - ruling class power
 - inequality as structural, not individual
- Introduce neo-Marxism as developments that adjust or expand classical Marxism. Keep it accessible by focusing on what changes:
 - more emphasis on culture, identity and consent

- focus on hegemony, not just coercion
 - attention to how people may accept inequality through persuasion and normalisation
- Students could apply Marxism and neo-Marxism to one topic they already know, such as:
 - family roles supporting capitalism through consumption and reproduction of labour power
 - schooling reinforcing inequality through hidden curriculum
 - policing and punishment targeting certain groups more than others
- Develop evaluation:
 - strengths include highlighting power, inequality and the role of institutions
 - limitations include economic determinism, underplaying agency and not fully explaining social change
- A strong activity is a 'Marxist critique' of a simple advert, school policy or media headline, asking students to identify what values and assumptions are being normalised.

Feminisms

- Introduce feminism as a perspective focused on gender inequality and patriarchy. Emphasise that feminisms are not one single view but a range of approaches.
- Teach the shared starting point:
 - gender inequalities are socially constructed, not natural
 - institutions can reproduce gender roles and unequal power
- Keep the different feminisms clear by anchoring them in what they see as the main source of inequality:
 - liberal feminism: inequality through discrimination and unequal opportunities
 - radical feminism: patriarchy and male power as fundamental
 - Marxist feminism: capitalism and patriarchy linked, with women's unpaid labour supporting the system
- Embed application:
 - family as a key site of gender socialisation and domestic labour
 - education as reproducing gender expectations through subject choices and teacher interaction
 - work as shaped by unequal pay, segregation and the glass ceiling
 - media as shaping representations of femininity and masculinity
- Encourage critical thinking about intersectionality, without making it overly technical. Students should recognise that gender interacts with class, ethnicity, age and nationality, shaping experiences differently.
- Build evaluation:
 - strengths include exposing hidden inequalities, power dynamics and taken-for-granted norms
 - criticisms include overgeneralising men and women, ignoring positive experiences, or underplaying choice and change
- A useful applied task is a 'gender lens' analysis: students take a short scenario about family roles or school discipline and identify what a feminist sociologist might focus on, then compare with functionalist or Marxist interpretations.

Functionalism and neo-functionalism

- Introduce functionalism as a consensus perspective. Society is seen as a system of interdependent parts working together to maintain stability and order.
- Teach key functionalist ideas:
 - shared norms and values hold society together
 - socialisation integrates individuals into society
 - institutions serve necessary functions
- Anchor functionalism in familiar examples:
 - the family socialises children and provides emotional support

- education teaches skills and values, and allocates roles
 - law and punishment maintain social order through norms and sanctions
- Encourage students to practise identifying the 'function' of a social institution. The key is not just stating a function but explaining how it contributes to stability.
- Introduce neo-functionalism as updated functionalism that recognises more complexity, including the possibility of conflict, change and diversity while still emphasising integration.
- Develop evaluation:
 - strengths include explaining social order, cohesion and how institutions operate together
 - limitations include ignoring inequality, assuming shared values, and treating institutions as naturally beneficial
- A good challenge task is to give an example such as rising divorce or family diversity and ask:
 - how might functionalists interpret this as a problem for stability?
 - how might they explain adaptation and change?This helps avoid simplistic functionalism.

Symbolic interactionism

- Introduce symbolic interactionism as a micro approach focusing on everyday interaction, meanings and identity. Clarify that it tends to start with individuals and small groups rather than institutions.
- Teach the core idea: people act based on meanings, and meanings are created and negotiated through interaction.
- Bring it to life through examples:
 - how teacher labelling can shape student identity
 - how family roles are performed and negotiated
 - how peer groups create group norms and status
 - how people manage impressions online
- Encourage students to recognise that interactionism often focuses on:
 - how identities are formed
 - how people interpret situations
 - how 'reality' is socially constructed through shared meanings
- A strong activity is to present a short dialogue or scenario and ask students to identify:
 - the meanings attached to behaviour
 - the status roles being performed
 - how identity is being shaped through response and reaction
- Develop evaluation:
 - strengths include depth, realism and understanding lived experience
 - limitations include ignoring wider structures such as class, patriarchy and capitalism
- Students could practise a 'two-level explanation':
 - one interactionist explanation of a behaviour
 - one structural explanation of the same behaviourThis reinforces structure and agency too.

Postmodernism and postmodernity

- Begin by separating the two terms clearly:
 - postmodernity refers to social conditions, such as rapid change, globalisation, media saturation and fragmented identities
 - postmodernism refers to theories that question certainty, grand narratives and claims to objective truth
- Teach the central postmodern argument that society is increasingly shaped by:
 - consumerism and lifestyle choices
 - media and representations

- diversity and fragmentation
 - fluid rather than fixed identities
- This can be embedded through examples students understand:
 - identity through online profiles and branding
 - changing family forms and relationships
 - global cultural influences
 - multiple, shifting identities depending on context
- Encourage students to evaluate whether postmodernism exaggerates change. Students can consider:
 - do class and gender still matter in powerful ways?
 - are identities really free choices, or still shaped by inequality and constraint?
- Use a 'grand narratives' activity:
 - students identify how Marxism and functionalism offer broad explanations of society
 - then consider how postmodernism challenges the idea that one theory can explain everything
- Develop evaluation:
 - strengths include recognising diversity, identity change and the role of media and consumption
 - criticisms include lack of clear evidence, political quietism, and underplaying inequality

Ongoing emphasis across the whole section

- Build frequent comparison into teaching so students do not learn perspectives in isolation. It often helps to return repeatedly to:
 - What does this perspective focus on most?
 - What does it tend to ignore?
 - What kind of evidence would it find convincing?
 - How would it explain the same issue differently from another perspective?
- Encourage students to apply perspectives to issues studied elsewhere in the course, especially families and socialisation. The aim is for theory to become a toolkit for explanation, not a list of definitions.
- Regularly practise short exam-style writing:
 - define a perspective or key term
 - explain how it would interpret a scenario
 - evaluate its strengths and limitations
- Reinforce that strong sociological answers do not just name perspectives. They use them to interpret evidence and reach a reasoned judgement.