

OxfordAQA International GCSE Sociology (9292)

Scheme of work

For teaching from September 2026 onwards

For International GCSE exams in June 2028 onwards

Introduction

These outline schemes of work are intended to help teachers plan and implement the teaching of the OxfordAQA International GCSE Sociology (9292) specification. The purpose of these outline schemes is to provide advice and guidance to teachers, not to prescribe or restrict their approach to the specification. Each scheme has been produced by a practising subject expert. There are many other valid ways of organising the course content and there is no requirement to use this scheme.

Suggested timings are indicative only, though the scheme assumes around 2-3 hours of teaching time per week. Teachers should select learning activities that are appropriate for their students, their local context and the curriculum time available. Teachers should aim to balance activities between discussion, written work, use of data and applied sociological examples to ensure that students develop the knowledge, skills and confidence required for both short-answer and extended response questions in the written examinations.

The order in which topics are presented is not prescriptive, and centres may choose to adapt or reorganise the sequence of content to suit their learners. Research Methods content is assessed in both examination papers and is therefore taught as a discrete topic and revisited across the course to support application in different sociological contexts.

The resources suggested throughout the scheme are indicative rather than exhaustive. Other suitable materials may be equally effective. Where relevant, teachers should carry out appropriate risk assessments. All links and references were correct at the time of publication. Centres are encouraged to make consistent use of sociological terminology as outlined in the specification and to ensure that students are confident using this terminology accurately in examination responses.

At the end of each topic area on the specification, a number of named sociologists and studies are listed. These examples are intended to illustrate key ideas and perspective within the topic and may be used by teachers to support students understanding of sociological explanations. They are not intended to represent a fixed or exhaustive list of required studies. Teachers may choose to use these examples or introduce alternative studies and contemporary research where appropriate. The suggested studies and sociological examples are references within the teaching activities in this scheme of work.

Assumed coverage and teaching hours.

This scheme of work assumes that the OxfordAQA International GCSE Sociology (9292) is taught as a two-year linear course, with a total of approximately 120–140 guided learning hours, in line with specification guidance. This equates to around two/three hours of teaching per week over two academic years, although this may vary according to local timetabling arrangements and students' prior experience of sociology.

Work will also need to be completed outside of lessons. The amount of independent study required will depend on curriculum time, the pace of delivery and the extent to which assessment practice and consolidation activities are incorporated into timetabled lessons.

International focus

Sociology is studied within an explicitly international context in this specification. Students are expected to apply sociological concepts, theories and evidence to **their own society or to societies they are familiar with** and to recognise similarities and differences between societies around the world.

Throughout the course, students should be encouraged to draw on local, national and global examples to illustrate sociological ideas. This scheme of work therefore supports comparative thinking and the application of sociology to a wide range of cultural, social and economic contexts. All examination responses must be written in English.

Course structure overview

This scheme of work is structured across two academic years to reflect the organisation of the assessment and to support the gradual development of sociological knowledge, skills and confidence.

Year One focuses on introducing students to sociology through the study of:

- Families
- Education
- Research Methods

Research Methods content is assessed in both examination papers. In this scheme, Research Methods is taught as a discrete unit in Year One - following the study of Families and Education - in order to develop students' knowledge and understanding of sociological research methods, key methodological concepts and the strengths and limitations of different approaches. This knowledge is then used to support students in applying Research Methods to data-based questions in **Paper 1**, as well as to Research Methods questions in **Paper 2**. Opportunities for review and application are built into later units to reinforce understanding and examination skills.

Year Two develops students' sociological understanding through the study of:

- Differences and Inequalities
- Socialisation and Social Control
- Research Methods (revisited with some application to topics)
- Revision and examination preparation

In **Year Two**, Research Methods knowledge is reviewed and applied across substantive topics. This supports consolidation of key concepts and strengthens students' ability to apply methodological understanding to a range of sociological issues and data sources in preparation for both examination papers.

Contents

You can use the title links to jump directly to the different sections of this scheme of work (Use Ctrl and click to follow the link)

Section title	Page
Year One	6
Weeks One to Two – Families, Marriage and Kinship	7
Weeks Three and Four – Perspectives on families and the relationship between families and society	12
Weeks Five and Seven – Social change and changing families	16
Weeks Eight to Ten – Gender, age and the experience of family life	20
Weeks Eleven to Thirteen – Education and schooling	23
Weeks Fourteen to Sixteen – Perspectives on education and the relationship between education and society	26
Weeks Seventeen and Eighteen – Relationships and processes in schools	29
Weeks Nineteen to Twenty-one - Educational attainment	32
Weeks Twenty-two - Global education	35
Weeks Twenty-three to Twenty-five - Research methods: Approaches to research	48
Weeks Twenty-six to Twenty-Nine – Main research methods and their strengths and limitations	40
Weeks Thirty to thirty-Two – Issues in research	44
Thirty-Three to Thirty-Five – Interpretation of data	48
Year Two	50
Weeks One to Two – Differences	52
Weeks Three to Four - Inequalities	54
Weeks Five to Seven - Social class	56
Weeks Eight and Nine - Gender	59
Weeks Ten to Eleven - Ethnicity	62
Weeks Twelve to Fourteen – Attempts to reduce/ eliminate inequalities	65
Weeks Fifteen to Seventeen – Individuals in society	67

Weeks Eighteen to Twenty-One – Socialisation	69
Weeks Twenty-Two to Twenty-Four – Social identities and social change	72
Weeks Twenty-Five to Twenty-Eight – Social control	75
Weeks Twenty-Nine to Thirty-Four – Final Revision and preparations for the examination	78

Year One

Overview for year one

Year One introduces students to sociology through the study of key social institutions, perspectives and research processes. The focus is on developing foundational sociological knowledge and skills, including the use of concepts, evidence and theories to understand social life in different societies.

Students begin by studying **Families** and **Education**, allowing them to explore social institutions that are familiar and accessible while developing an understanding of how sociologists explain social structures, relationships and inequalities. These topics introduce students to core sociological perspectives including functionalism, Marxism, feminism and interactionism, which are revisited and developed throughout the course.

Research Methods is taught as a discrete unit towards the end of Year One. This allows students to gain a clear and structured understanding of how sociological research is designed, conducted and evaluated. Students learn about different research approaches, methods, sampling techniques and ethical considerations, as well as key concepts such as validity, reliability and representativeness. Teaching Research Methods at this stage supports students in consolidating their sociological understanding and prepares them for more independent application of methods in Year Two.

Across Year One, students are encouraged to apply sociological ideas to their own society and to societies they are familiar with, reflecting the international focus of the specification. Opportunities should be provided for students to develop confidence in responding to both short and extended examination questions and in interpreting simple quantitative and qualitative data.

By the end of Year One, students should have a secure understanding of core sociological concepts and perspectives, an awareness of how sociologists study society and the ability to apply this knowledge to a range of social issues in preparation for the demands of Year Two and the assessment of **Paper 1: Introducing Sociology**.

Introduction to Families

Weeks One to Two – Families, Marriage and Kinship

Specification content

3.1.1.1 Families, marriage and kinship

- 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:

- understand that the concept of family is socially constructed and that definitions of family vary between societies, cultures and over time
- be able to define and distinguish accurately between nuclear families, extended families (vertical and horizontal) and single parent families
- understand that individuals may live in alternatives to families, and be able to explain the social, economic and cultural reasons for these arrangements
- understand and be able to apply Therborn's types of family system as an analytical framework for comparing families across societies
- understand how family structures vary between cultures, including differences between matriarchal and patriarchal family systems
- be able to describe and compare different types of marriage, recognising cultural variation and social change
- apply knowledge of families and marriage to short-answer and extended-response exam questions
- use examples from their own society or other societies.

Suggested timing

4-6 hours (depending on student confidence and use of comparative examples).

Possible teaching and learning activities

Defining the family and kinship

- Teaching begins by explicitly challenging the assumption that there is a single, universal definition of the family.
- Students are asked to reflect on their own understandings of family by considering:
 - who they include as family
 - who they do not include
 - the reasons for these decisions.
- Teacher-led discussion draws out common assumptions, such as:
 - families must live together

- o families must be based on biological relationships
 - o families must include parents and children.
- Students are presented with a structured set of realistic scenarios drawn from a range of societies, for example:
 - o a married couple with children living together
 - o a single parent living with one or more children following separation
 - o grandparents, parents and grandchildren living in the same household
 - o two parents working abroad while children live with extended family members
 - o an elderly person living alone but supported daily by relatives
 - o children living with foster carers on a long-term basis.
- For each scenario, students:
 - o decide whether it could be considered a family
 - o identify the criteria being used, such as co-residence, care, emotional support, legal responsibility or biological ties
- Teacher introduces kinship as a sociological concept and explicitly teaches:
 - o biological kinship (relationships based on blood)
 - o legal kinship (relationships created through marriage or adoption)
 - o social kinship (relationships based on care and support rather than blood or law).
- Students complete guided activities constructing simple kinship diagrams or family trees to illustrate how kinship networks may extend beyond the household.
- As a consolidation activity, students could produce a short, written response answering the question “*What makes a family?*”, using at least three sociological criteria.
- These responses can be revisited at the end of the topic to demonstrate how understanding has developed.

Types of family structures

- Explicit teaching of nuclear families, including:
 - o clear definition: parents and dependent children living together
 - o historical association with industrial and post-industrial societies
 - o discussion of why the nuclear family is often presented as the ‘norm’ despite the existence of family diversity.
- Teaching of extended families, with clear distinction between:
 - o vertically extended families, involving three or more generations
 - o horizontally extended families, involving wider relatives such as aunts, uncles and cousins.
- Teaching of single parent families, including:
 - o definition: one adult living with one or more dependent children
 - o reasons for their existence, such as separation, death of a partner or personal choice. *Note: if appropriate to the local context, also discuss divorce as a reason.*
 - o recognition that single parent families are found across a wide range of societies and cultures.
- Students complete multi-stage classification activities, including:
 - o matching household descriptions to family types
 - o justifying their classifications using sociological terminology
 - o identifying cases where classification is less clear and explaining why.
- Students create or annotate simple visual representations of each family type, clearly labelling key features such as generational depth or household structure.
- Teacher models accurate, exam-appropriate definitions and reinforces precision of language.
- Embedded assessment includes short-answer exam-style questions, such as:
 - o define an extended family
 - o define what is meant by a single parent family.
- Peer marking using simplified mark-scheme descriptors reinforces exam expectations.

Alternatives to families

- Teaching establishes that not all individuals live within traditional family structures and that alternatives exist for a range of social reasons.
- Exploration of communes, including:
 - collective living arrangements
 - shared resources and responsibilities
 - social or ideological motivations for communal living.
- Teaching of living alone, including:
 - individual choice and independence
 - economic factors such as employment mobility
 - demographic change, including ageing populations.
- Teaching of foster care and children's homes, focusing on:
 - reasons why children may be cared for outside biological families
 - the role of the state in providing alternative care arrangements.
- Students complete a structured comparison grid examining:
 - who is most likely to live in each arrangement
 - why the arrangement exists
 - potential advantages and disadvantages.
- Students rank alternatives to families according to the level of stability or support they may offer, justifying their decisions.
- Teaching emphasises that experiences within each arrangement vary and should not be generalised.
- Teacher explicitly links alternatives to families to wider social changes, such as:
 - increasing individualism
 - urbanisation
 - changing social policies and welfare provision.

Therborn's types of family system

- Introduction to Therborn's work as a way of analysing how families are organised differently across societies.
- Teaching emphasises that Therborn's family systems are analytical tools, rather than fixed descriptions of real families.
- Family systems are explored in relation to:
 - authority and power within the family
 - gender roles and expectations
 - marriage practices
 - relationships between generations.
- Use of a detailed but simplified comparison table, with headings such as:
 - who holds authority in the family?
 - expectations placed on children
 - gender roles within the household
 - importance of extended kinship networks.
- Students apply Therborn's framework to short descriptive profiles of societies, explaining and justifying their choices.
- Teaching explicitly models how Therborn's family systems can be used to support explanations in extended-response questions rather than being described in isolation.
- Students practise writing short comparative explanations using Therborn's framework.
- Discussion focuses on:
 - the usefulness of categorising family systems
 - the limitations of placing complex societies into single categories
 - the possibility that societies may display features of more than one family system.

Cultural variation: matriarchal and patriarchal families

- Teaching establishes that family structures vary significantly between cultures and societies.
- Explicit teaching of patriarchal families, including:
 - male dominance in decision-making
 - traditional gender roles
 - control of resources and inheritance.
- Explicit teaching of matriarchal or matrifocal families, including:
 - greater female authority or influence
 - different patterns of power, inheritance or caregiving.
- Students examine brief cultural case studies and identify:
 - who holds power within the family
 - how decisions are made
 - how gender roles are organised.
- Structured comparison tasks require students to:
 - identify similarities and differences between family systems
 - avoid stereotyping or over-generalisation.
- Teaching reinforces that cultures are diverse internally and change over time.

Types of marriage

- Teaching of arranged marriages, including:
 - the role of families in partner selection
 - cultural, religious and social contexts.
- Teaching of love marriages, where individuals choose partners based on personal relationships.
- Teaching of monogamy as a marriage system involving one partner at a time.
- Students work through progressively complex scenarios, including:
 - clear examples of each type of marriage
 - more ambiguous examples requiring justification.
- Students complete a comparison table showing similarities and differences between arranged and love marriages, focusing on choice, family involvement and cultural context.
- Explicit distinction is made between arranged and forced marriage, with reference to:
 - consent
 - legal frameworks
 - ethical considerations,
- Discussion explores how marriage practices:
 - reflect cultural values
 - vary within societies
 - change over time.

Exam skills and consolidation

- Regular retrieval practice focuses on:
 - key definitions
 - family types
 - marriage types.
- Students practise responding to:
 - 2-mark definition questions
 - 4-mark “identify and briefly explain” questions
 - 8-mark extended-response questions.
- Teacher models how to:
 - use accurate sociological terminology
 - integrate examples from different societies
 - structure longer responses clearly and effectively.

Resources

- OxfordAQA International GCSE Sociology specification
- Scenario cards and household descriptions
- Kinship diagrams and comparison tables
- Cultural case study materials
- Exam-style questions and mark schemes

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

Specification content

3.1.1.2 Perspectives on families and the relationship between families and society

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:

- understand that sociologists explain families in different ways depending on theoretical perspective
- describe key functionalist, Marxist and feminist ideas about families
- explain how each perspective views the relationship between families and wider society
- evaluate sociological perspectives on families and the relationship between families and society
- compare sociological perspectives and identify key differences in their explanations
- apply perspectives to examples from their own society or another society they know
- use appropriate sociological concepts and terminology accurately.

Suggested timing

4-6 hours

Possible teaching and learning activities

Introducing sociological perspectives on families

- Begin by explicitly introducing the idea of a sociological perspective as a way of explaining society rather than describing individual behaviour.
- Clarify that:
 - perspectives are based on assumptions about how society works
 - different perspectives often focus on different issues, such as power, inequality or stability
 - no single perspective offers a complete explanation of family life.
- Use a simple organiser or board summary showing:
 - the name of each perspective
 - what it sees as the main role of the family
 - who it believes benefits most.
- Reinforce for international students that:
 - families vary widely across societies and cultures
 - students are encouraged to use examples from any society they are familiar with
 - there is no expectation to describe a "typical" or "Western" family.
- As a brief starter activity, present students with statements such as:

- “Families help keep society stable”
- “Families benefit some groups more than others”
- Students suggest which perspective might agree with each statement, revisiting this later to check understanding.

Functionalism: functions of the family

- Introduce functionalism as a consensus perspective that sees society as based on shared norms and values.
- Explain that functionalists view the family as a key institution that contributes to social stability.
- Teach the main functions of the family, ensuring students understand both the term and its meaning:
 - primary socialisation: where children learn norms and values
 - stabilisation of adult personalities: providing emotional support
 - economic function: meeting basic material needs
 - reproduction: producing new members of society.
- Emphasise that functionalists see these functions as benefiting both individuals and society as a whole.
- Introduce the idea of instrumental and expressive roles:
 - instrumental roles linked to financial support
 - expressive roles linked to care and emotional support
 - explain that functionalists view this division as efficient and complementary, not unequal.

Functionalism: applying functions to family arrangements

- Provide students with short, fictional descriptions of people and their living arrangements. These might include:
 - a nuclear family
 - a multigenerational household
 - adults working outside the home while others provide care
 - families living in urban or rural settings.
- Students read each description and identify:
 - which functions of the family are present
 - how those functions are carried out in practice.
- Encourage students to highlight or annotate the text, linking specific details to functionalist concepts.
- Follow-up discussion:
 - Are all functions present in every example?
 - Would functionalists see some arrangements as more effective than others?
- For consolidation, students rewrite one example to strengthen a particular function and explain how this would increase social stability from a functionalist perspective.

Functionalism: how the nuclear family fits modern industrial societies

- Explain what functionalists mean by modern industrial society, keeping definitions general and accessible.
- Teach why the nuclear family is seen as suitable:
 - it is relatively small and geographically mobile
 - it allows adults to move for work
 - roles are clearly defined.
- Stress that this is a theoretical explanation and does not mean:
 - all families are nuclear
 - nuclear families are the only successful family type.
- Short written task:
 - “Explain why functionalists believe the nuclear family fits modern industrial societies.”

Marxism: families as agents of social control

- Introduce Marxism as a conflict perspective that focuses on social class and inequality.
- Explain that Marxists argue families help to maintain capitalism rather than benefit everyone equally.
- Teach the idea of families as agents of social control, covering how families:
 - socialise children into obedience and respect for authority
 - prepare children for working life
 - encourage acceptance of inequality as normal
 - provide unpaid domestic labour
 - support consumption and spending.
- Clarify that Marxists are criticising the role of families within the economic system, not individual parents or households.

Marxism: applying social control to everyday family life

- Provide a short narrative describing:
 - parental expectations around work, discipline and success
 - attitudes towards authority and rules.
- Students identify:
 - how conformity is encouraged
 - how work and hierarchy are presented as normal or inevitable.
- Teacher explicitly links responses to:
 - reproduction of the workforce
 - maintenance of class inequality.
- Comparison task:
 - Students contrast how functionalists and Marxists would interpret the same family arrangement.

Feminisms: families and the position of men and women

- Introduce feminism as a perspective concerned with gender inequality and patriarchy.
- Explain that feminists argue families often shape unequal positions for men and women.
- 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.
- Emphasise that feminist analysis focuses on:
 - social expectations
 - power relations
 - structural inequality rather than individual choices.

Feminism: critiquing family arrangements

- Provide students with fictional household profiles using neutral labels (e.g. Person A, Person B).
- Each profile includes information about:
 - paid work
 - unpaid domestic tasks
 - childcare
 - emotional responsibilities
 - decision-making.
- Students consider:
 - who does which type of work
 - who holds power
 - whether roles appear gendered.
- Using feminist ideas, students identify elements that could be described as patriarchal, even where families appear modern or equal on the surface.

- Class discussion focuses on how patriarchy can operate subtly through norms and expectations.

Comparing perspectives on families

- Draw together the three perspectives:
 - functionalism emphasises stability and shared values
 - Marxism focuses on class inequality and control
 - feminism highlights gender inequality and patriarchy.
- Students complete a comparison grid or analyse one fictional family using all three perspectives.
- Teacher models evaluative language such as:
 - “From a functionalist perspective...”
 - “In contrast, Marxists would argue...”
 - “Feminists criticise this arrangement because...”

Links to assessment

- Direct preparation for:
 - 6 mark “Explain the view...” questions
 - 8 mark “To what extent...” questions
- Supports students in:
 - applying theory to examples
 - comparing perspectives
 - developing clear, structured written responses.

Resources

- Teacher-produced family and household scenarios (fictional)
- Perspective comparison grids (functionalism, Marxism, feminism)
- Key sociological concept glossary
- Exam-style questions and model responses
- Presentation slides summarising perspectives on families

Weeks Five and 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.

3.1.1.3 Social change and changing families

- Demographic changes: family size; birth and death rates; infant and child mortality; internal and international migration; ageing populations
- Explanations of demographic change
- The relationship between families and industrialisation
- The relationship between families and urbanisation
- Family diversity:
 - newer types of families including pivot or sandwich generation
 - reconstituted/blended families
 - living apart together (LAT)
 - child-free couples
 - 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.

Learning outcomes

Students should:

- describe key demographic changes that have affected families in different societies
- explain reasons for changes in birth rates, death rates, migration and ageing populations
- understand how industrialisation and urbanisation have influenced family structures and relationships
- identify and describe a range of contemporary family types
- explain reasons for increasing family diversity
- apply examples from their own society or another society to illustrate family change.

Suggested timing

4-6 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. Comparisons between families in the past and present, or between families in different societies. This can be used to illustrate changes in size,

structure and roles within the family, including who lives together and how responsibilities are organised.

- Students should explore how ideas about what counts as a “normal” family vary across cultures and historical periods, encouraging early awareness that family forms are socially constructed.
- Short stimulus material, such as written family profiles or images representing different household arrangements, may be used to prompt discussion about similarities, differences and possible social reasons for change.

Demographic change and families

- Introduce key demographic concepts including birth rate, death rate, infant mortality, life expectancy and migration.
- Use tables, graphs or population pyramids showing population change in different societies to support students in interpreting demographic data.
- Students could work in pairs to match demographic trends (for example falling birth rates or ageing populations) with possible consequences for families.
- Small group activity analysing short demographic data sets and identifying what these changes might mean for family size or generational relationships.
- Whole-class discussion exploring how demographic change can influence family structures, including smaller families, ageing populations and multigenerational households.

Explanations of demographic change

- Explore reasons for demographic change such as improvements in healthcare, nutrition and sanitation, increased access to education and developments in contraception and family planning.
- Students could complete a cause-and-effect activity linking specific social changes to demographic outcomes.
- For example, students could match developments such as improved healthcare or greater access to education with outcomes such as longer life expectancy or smaller family sizes.
- Encourage students to consider how demographic patterns may differ between societies at different levels of economic development.

Migration and families

- Introduce internal and international migration and explore reasons why people move, such as employment, education, conflict or family reunification.
- Discuss how migration may influence family life, including families living across different countries, the role of extended family support networks and the experiences of transnational families.
- Students could analyse short case studies of migrant families and identify ways migration has influenced family roles, relationships or living arrangements.
- Small group discussion considering both the challenges and opportunities migration may create for families.
- Brief case studies can be used to explore contrasting experiences of migrant families and to identify both positive and negative consequences of migration for family life.

Industrialisation and families

- Introduce the concept of industrialisation and explore how economic changes influence patterns of work and family life.

- Examine how industrialisation contributed to changes in family organisation, including the separation of home and workplace and changes in the economic role of the family.
- Students could complete a comparison activity contrasting key features of family life before and after industrialisation.
- Pair activity where students identify how changing work patterns may influence family roles and responsibilities.

Urbanisation and families

- Introduce urbanisation and explore reasons why people move from rural areas to towns and cities.
- Discuss how urban living may influence family structures and relationships, for example through smaller living spaces, increased independence and changing support networks.
- Students could examine examples of rural and urban communities and identify differences in family life.
- Discussion activity exploring whether urbanisation strengthens or weakens family ties.

Family diversity

- Introduce the concept of family diversity and emphasise that there is no single “normal” family structure.
- Explore examples of different family forms, including reconstituted families, living apart together (LAT) relationships, child-free couples, beanpole families and the sandwich generation.
- Students could be given short descriptions of different households and asked to classify the type of family represented.
- Small group discussion exploring why different family structures may meet the needs of individuals at different stages of life.

Explanations of family diversity

- Increasing family diversity can be explained by demographic changes such as longer life expectancy, lower birth rates and higher divorce rates.
- Changes in laws relating to marriage and family life have made a wider range of family forms legally and socially acceptable in many societies. *Note: if appropriate to the local context, also discuss changes in laws related to divorce.*
- Social policies, including childcare provision, welfare support and employment policies, can influence family structures by shaping choices around work, care and family responsibilities.
- Students should be encouraged to link specific laws or policies to particular family changes, strengthening explanation rather than simple description.
- The impact of these factors varies between societies and should always be considered in context.

Applying knowledge and consolidation

- Students can practise applying their knowledge through short explanatory or evaluative questions focused on reasons for family change, using examples from their own society or another society.
- Exam-style questions may be used to develop written responses that require the use of sociological terms and relevant examples.
- Consolidation activities can focus on linking demographic change, industrialisation and urbanisation to increasing family diversity, reinforcing understanding of how social change shapes family life.
- Students may be encouraged to reflect on how families might continue to change in the future.

Resources

- Demographic data presented in accessible formats e.g. tables, graphs or population pyramids, showing changes in birth rates, death rates, life expectancy and population structure across different societies.
- Short written case studies illustrating family change, including examples of migration, industrialisation and urbanisation (drawn from a range of cultural and social contexts).
- Visual resources representing different family forms and household arrangements, used to support discussion and comparison of family diversity.
- Brief family profiles or household descriptions to support classification of family types and application of sociological terminology.
- Comparative material showing family life in different societies or historical periods, including rural and urban contexts.
- Examination-style questions and short writing tasks focused on explaining reasons for family change and increasing family diversity.
- Teacher-prepared summaries or glossaries of key demographic and family-related terms to support accurate use of sociological language.

Weeks Eight to Ten – 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.

3.1.1.3 Gender, age and the experience of family life

- 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:

- describe ‘traditional’ male and female roles within families
- explain the expressive and instrumental roles, including the triple shift
- explain why gender roles within families have changed
- describe how domestic labour and power may be distributed within families
- explain sociological views on violence against women and abuse in families
- describe how the experience of family life differs for children in different societies
- explain what is meant by child centredness and boomerang families
- describe the roles and status of older people and grandparents within families
- apply examples from their own society or another society to illustrate differences in family experience.

Suggested timing

6-8 hours

Possible teaching and learning activities

Gender roles: building on prior learning

- Briefly recap the expressive and instrumental roles and the triple shift.
- Emphasise that in this section the focus is on how these roles shape everyday experiences of family life, rather than simply defining the concepts.
- Students could be given short descriptions of different family types (for example, dual-earner households, single-parent families or extended families) and asked to identify:
 - how expressive and instrumental roles are shared
 - whether the triple shift appears to operate

- A short, written task could ask students to explain how gender roles affect daily routines, responsibilities and relationships within families.

Changes to gender roles and reasons for change

- Build on earlier work on social change by revisiting key reasons for changing gender roles, such as female employment, education, legal changes and shifting social attitudes.
- Encourage students to focus specifically on changes within family life, rather than society more generally.
- Students could explain how one social change has altered family roles and relationships.
- Discussion could explore whether these changes have occurred at the same pace in all societies.

The division of domestic labour and power

- Introduce this topic as an extension of gender roles, focusing on who does what within families and who has power.
- Students could reflect, sensitively and optionally, on their own family lives by identifying:
 - who completes domestic tasks
 - who provides childcare
 - who makes key decisions.
- This can be followed by the use of contrasting family examples to compare different patterns of domestic labour.
- Students could then compare families and consider:
 - similarities and differences in the division of domestic labour
 - whether arrangements appear fair or unequal
- Introduce discussion of fairness, including possible advantages and disadvantages of a clear division of domestic labour.
- This could be linked to sociological perspectives, for example:
 - functionalist views that see role differentiation as beneficial
 - feminist views that argue unequal domestic labour leads to inequality and exploitation.
- A short evaluative task could ask students to explain one advantage and one disadvantage of the domestic division of labour.

Violence against women and abuse in families

- Frame this topic as an extreme example of unequal power within families.
- Briefly recap feminist ideas about patriarchy and power from earlier sections.
- Introduce violence against women and abuse in families carefully, making clear that not all families experience abuse.
- Students could explain one sociological reason why abuse may occur within families and link this to power and inequality.

Children and family life

- Build on earlier discussion of childhood by focusing on the status and roles of children in different societies.
- Introduce child centredness, explaining how family life may prioritise children's needs, education and wellbeing.
- Students could explore how child-centred their own society is by identifying:
 - laws or policies designed to protect children
 - expectations placed on children (for example, education, work, independence).
- This could be followed by comparison with societies that are less child centred.
- A short, written task could ask students to explain how child centredness affects family life and relationships.

Adult children and boomerang families

- Introduce boomerang families as part of changing family experiences across the life course.
- Students could link this to housing costs, education and employment insecurity discussed elsewhere in the course.
- Students could explain one reason why boomerang families may be more common in some societies than others.
- Discussion could consider how boomerang families affect family relationships, independence and responsibilities.

Older people and family life

- Focus on the status and roles of older people in different societies, building on earlier work on ageing populations.
- Explore the roles of grandparents, particularly in childcare and emotional support.
- Students could compare the experiences of older people in extended family systems and nuclear family systems.
- Discussion could consider how cultural expectations shape the experience of ageing within families.

Applying knowledge and consolidation

- Students practise short exam-style questions, such as:
 - Explain one way gender roles may affect the experience of family life.
 - Explain one way age can affect family life.
- As a plenary, students could identify one way family experiences differ by gender or age and one reason for this difference.

Resources

- Key term glossaries covering concepts such as expressive role, instrumental role, triple shift, domestic labour, child centredness and boomerang families.
- Short written family scenarios or case studies showing different household arrangements, gender roles and age-related experiences of family life, which can be used for discussion and comparison.
- Simple data or summaries (or any available short documentaries) on time use within families (for example, who does housework or childcare) to support teaching on the division of domestic labour and power.
- Media extracts or articles (appropriate for students) relating to changing gender roles, working parents, childcare or family responsibilities across generations.
- Policy or legal examples relating to children (such as compulsory education, child protection laws or parental responsibilities) to support discussion of child centredness.
- Case studies or short articles on boomerang families, housing costs or youth employment to illustrate adult children returning to the parental home.
- Examples or reports highlighting the role of grandparents in childcare or family support, particularly in different cultural contexts.
- Exam-style questions and model answers

Weeks Eleven to Thirteen – Education and schooling

Specification content

3.1.2.1 Education and schooling

- Formal and informal education
- Official curriculum and hidden curriculum
- Levels of education:
 - nursery or pre-school
 - primary education
 - secondary education
 - tertiary education.
- Types of schools:
 - state or public schools
 - private schools
 - selective and non-selective schools
 - faith or religious schools
 - international schools
 - boarding or residential schools
 - progressive schools
 - vocational education.
- Online learning

Learning outcomes

Students should:

- define and distinguish between formal and informal education
- explain the difference between the official curriculum and the hidden curriculum
- identify and describe different levels of education
- describe a range of school types and explain why they exist
- compare different education systems within and between societies
- apply sociological ideas about schooling to their own educational experiences
- use examples from their own society or a society they know to support explanations.

Suggested timing

6-7 hours

Possible teaching and learning activities

Formal and informal education

- Introduce the distinction between formal and informal education through clear teacher explanation. Formal education should be defined as structured, planned learning that takes place within schools and colleges and leads to qualifications, while informal education refers to learning that occurs outside formal institutions, such as within families, peer groups and communities.
- Students could be asked to identify examples of informal learning from their own lives, such as learning social skills, values or practical knowledge at home or with friends. This can be followed by a brief discussion about why informal education is important even though it is not examined or certificated.
- Use short scenarios or descriptions of learning situations and ask students to decide whether they represent formal or informal education and to justify their answer. This supports exam skills linked to definition and application questions.

Official and hidden curriculum

- Introduce/ define the official curriculum as the subjects, content and qualifications formally taught in schools. Emphasise that this curriculum is planned, assessed and often standardised within a society.
- Introduce the hidden curriculum by explaining how schools also transmit norms and values such as punctuality, obedience, competition and respect for authority. These ideas should be clearly linked to everyday school routines rather than taught abstractly.
- Students could reflect on their own school experience and identify things they have learned that are not written in a syllabus, such as how to behave in lessons or how to respond to authority figures. These examples can be shared and grouped into common themes to reinforce understanding.
- Link explicitly to assessment by practising short definition questions, for example defining hidden curriculum using clear sociological language.

Levels of education

- Explain the different **levels of education** step by step:
 - nursery or pre-school
 - primary education
 - secondary education
 - tertiary education.
- Use a simple flow diagram or timeline to show progression through the education system. Teacher explanation should highlight that not all students follow the same pathway and that systems vary between societies.
- Students could compare their own educational journey with a short description of education in another country, identifying similarities and differences in structure and progression.
- Reinforce key terms by asking students to write brief definitions of each level using exam-style language.

Types of schools

- Introduce different types of schools by grouping them conceptually rather than as a long list. For example:
 - state or public and private schools
 - selective and non-selective schools
 - faith or religious schools
 - international schools and boarding schools
 - vocational and progressive education.
- Teacher explanation should focus on why different school types exist and the needs they are designed to meet within society.
- Use short case studies (or examples of schools in your own context/ society) describing different schools and ask students to identify the type of school and explain its purpose. This helps students move beyond description and towards explanation.
- Students could discuss advantages and disadvantages of different school types, encouraging them to consider issues of choice, access and inequality without moving ahead into attainment explanations.

Online learning

- Introduce online learning as a growing feature of modern education systems. Explain how it can involve distance learning, blended learning or fully online courses.
- Discussion could focus on how online learning has changed access to education in different societies, including increased flexibility but also challenges such as lack of digital access or reduced social interaction.
- Students could consider whether online learning is more or less effective than traditional schooling, supporting their views with examples.

- Link back to earlier content by asking students whether online learning still involves a hidden curriculum and what this might look like.

Building exam skills and application

- Throughout the topic, regularly revisit key terminology using low-stakes retrieval practice. This could include short quizzes or quick written definitions at the start or end of lessons.
- Students should practise answering 2- and 4-mark questions linked to this section, focusing on clear definitions and brief explanations.
- Opportunities should be built in for students to apply ideas to their own society or a society they know, particularly when discussing school types and online learning. This prepares students for extended response questions requiring contextual examples.

Resources

- OxfordAQA International GCSE Sociology Student Book
- Short written case studies of education systems in your own context/ society of different countries
- Diagrams showing education pathways and school types
- Past paper questions focused on education definitions and explanations
- Writing frames for short answer questions
- Retrieval practice activities using key terms and concepts

Weeks Fourteen to Sixteen – Perspectives on education and the relationship between education and society

Specification content

3.1.2.2 Perspectives on education and the relationship between education and society

Functionalism

- role allocation
- shared values
- developing human capital
- schools as a bridge from the particularistic to the universalistic

Marxism

- schooling for different social classes
- reproducing and legitimising class structures
- preparation for work
- the myth of meritocracy

Feminisms

- the role of education in shaping gender roles and expectations

Learning outcomes

Students should:

- understand how different sociological perspectives explain the role and purpose of education in society
- be able to outline and explain functionalist, Marxist and feminist views of education
- recognise similarities and differences between perspectives
- apply perspectives to examples from their own education system or another society they are familiar with
- begin to evaluate the extent to which education benefits all groups equally
- evaluate sociological perspectives explanations of the role and purpose of education in society
- develop confidence using sociological concepts such as meritocracy, role allocation, hidden curriculum and gender socialisation.

Suggested timing

6-7 hours

Possible teaching and learning activities

The ‘functions’ of education

- Begin by explicitly introducing the idea that sociologists ask what education is for.
- Students could be asked broad, open questions such as:
 - what do you think the purpose of school is?
 - who do you think benefits most from education?
 - what would society be like without schools?
- Teacher explanation that different sociological perspectives offer different answers to these questions.

- Students could briefly record their own views before being introduced to sociological explanations, allowing later comparison between personal opinions and sociological theories.
- Emphasise that this section focuses on the role education plays in society, rather than what happens inside schools on a day-to-day basis.

Functionalist perspectives on education

- Teach the functionalist view that education is a positive institution that contributes to social order and stability.
- Explain role allocation, focusing on how schools:
 - assess ability through examinations and qualifications
 - allocate individuals to future roles based on achievement.
- Introduce the idea of shared values, linking education to:
 - social cohesion
 - teaching norms such as punctuality, effort and respect for authority.
- Explore how education is seen as developing human capital, preparing students with skills and knowledge needed for the economy.
- Teach Parsons' view of schools as a bridge between the family and wider society, explaining the shift from:
 - particularistic standards in the family
 - to universalistic standards applied equally in schools.
- Students could be given short descriptions of pupils or school situations and asked to identify which functionalist functions are being carried out.
- Encourage students to consider whether education systems they are familiar with actually operate in a fair and meritocratic way.

Marxist perspectives on education

- Introduce the Marxist view that education primarily serves the interests of capitalism and the ruling class.
- Explain how schools prepare students for work by:
 - promoting obedience and conformity
 - encouraging acceptance of hierarchy and authority.
- Teach the idea that education reproduces class inequality, meaning:
 - middle-class pupils are more likely to succeed
 - working-class pupils are more likely to enter lower-paid employment.
- Explore what is described as the 'myth' of meritocracy, explaining how education appears fair but disguises inequality.
- Link Marxist ideas to:
 - the hidden curriculum
 - streaming and setting
 - vocational versus academic routes.
- Students could examine school rules, reward systems or assessment methods and consider how these mirror expectations in the workplace.
- Encourage comparison with functionalism, particularly around whether education genuinely rewards ability and effort.

Feminist perspectives on education

- Teach feminist views that focus on how education can reinforce gender roles and expectations.
- Explore how schools may:
 - encourage different subject choices for boys and girls
 - reinforce stereotypes through teaching materials, language or expectations.
- Discuss how education can contribute to wider gender inequalities in:
 - employment opportunities
 - pay and status.

- Introduce the idea that education can also be a site of change, with feminists arguing that increased access to education can challenge traditional gender roles.
- Students could consider subject choice data, school displays or careers guidance and identify possible gender messages.
- Encourage students to think about whether gender expectations in education differ across societies.

Comparing perspectives

- Support students in directly comparing functionalist, Marxist and feminist views by focusing on:
 - who benefits from education?
 - whether education promotes equality or inequality?
- Students could summarise each perspective using key concepts or complete a comparison grid.
- Introduce simple evaluative language, such as:
 - 'Some sociologists argue...'
 - 'In contrast...'
- Reinforce exam skills by linking perspectives to:
 - 6-mark explanation questions
 - 8 mark "to what extent" questions using examples from different societies.

Resources

- OxfordAQA International GCSE Sociology Student Book
- Teacher-produced summaries of sociological perspectives views on the role and functions of education
- Short case studies of education systems in different countries
- Past paper questions focusing on meritocracy and the role of education
- Knowledge organisers or comparison tables for sociological perspectives

Weeks Seventeen and Eighteen – Relationships and processes in schools

Specification content

3.1.2.3 Relationships and processes in schools

- School ethos and curricula, including:
 - ethnocentrism
 - vocational education
 - unequal access to knowledge.
- Interactionism and a focus on micro-level interactions in schools
- Behaviour and sanctions, including:
 - positive sanctions
 - negative sanctions.
- Teacher expectations, including:
 - labelling and the self-fulfilling prophecy
 - stereotyping
 - ideal pupils
 - the halo effect.
- Pupil subcultures, including:
 - pro-school subcultures
 - anti-school subcultures.
- Racism and sexism in schools

Learning outcomes

Students should:

- understand how daily interactions in schools shape pupil behaviour, identity and achievement
- be able to explain how teacher expectations may influence pupil outcomes
- recognise how school rules, sanctions and rewards operate as forms of social control
- understand the development and characteristics of different pupil subcultures
- be able to apply interactionist ideas to real school settings and experiences
- analyse how racism and sexism may operate within schools
- use examples from their own society or school system to support explanations.

Suggested timing

4-5 hours

Possible teaching and learning activities

School ethos and curriculum

- Introduce the idea that schools transmit values and expectations as well as knowledge. Teacher explanation should focus on what is meant by *school ethos*, including rules, routines, behaviour policies, uniforms, assemblies and reward systems.
- Students could identify visible features of school ethos in different schools or societies and consider what these suggest about behaviour, discipline and success. This could be supported through images, short written descriptions or extracts from school prospectuses.
- Teach the concept of ethnocentrism within the curriculum, focusing on how some cultures, histories and perspectives may be prioritised over others.

- Students could discuss whose knowledge is valued within different subjects and whether some groups may feel more represented than others.
- Explore unequal access to knowledge, for example through subject choices, streaming, setting or access to academic versus vocational pathways.
- Students could compare vocational education with academic education and discuss how each is valued within their society, using simple comparison tasks or tables to structure discussion.

Interactionism and micro-level processes

- Introduce interactionism as a perspective that focuses on everyday interactions in schools rather than whole-school structures.
- Emphasise that meanings are created through interaction between teachers and pupils, rather than behaviour being fixed or objectively defined.
- Use familiar classroom-based examples to illustrate how the same behaviour may be interpreted differently depending on context or prior expectations.
- Students could analyse short classroom scenarios and discuss how meanings are constructed through interaction, considering both teacher and pupil perspectives.

Teacher expectations

- Teach **teacher expectations** in detail, ensuring students understand:
 - labelling
 - the self-fulfilling prophecy
 - stereotyping
 - ideal pupils
 - the halo effect.
- Use accessible examples to show how labels may be applied based on behaviour, appearance, language use or background.
- Students could be given brief pupil profiles and asked to identify possible labels and predict how these may influence teacher behaviour and pupil outcomes.
- Link explicitly to achievement by explaining how repeated positive or negative treatment may shape confidence, motivation and performance over time.

Behaviour and sanctions

- Introduce behaviour management as a process of social control within schools.
- Clearly distinguish between positive sanctions, such as praise, rewards, certificates or privileges, and negative sanctions, such as detentions, exclusions or loss of privileges.
- Students could categorise examples of sanctions used in different schools and discuss their intended purpose.
- Encourage discussion around effectiveness, fairness and whether sanctions affect all pupils equally.

Pupil subcultures

- Introduce pupil subcultures, explaining how shared experiences of schooling may lead pupils to develop distinct values and behaviours.
- Teach the characteristics of pro-school subcultures and anti-school subcultures, using clear and contrasting examples.
- Use short case studies or descriptions of pupil groups to help students identify features of each type of subculture.
- Link subcultures back to labelling and teacher expectations, showing how negative labels may contribute to the development of anti-school behaviour.

Racism and sexism in schools

- Explore how racism and sexism may operate within schools, including through teacher expectations, disciplinary practices, subject choices and curriculum content.

- Emphasise that discrimination may be intentional or unintentional and may be embedded within everyday school practices.
- With careful planning and sensitivity, students could examine examples of differential treatment and discuss possible consequences for identity and educational achievement.
- Maintain an international focus by encouraging students to draw on examples from their own society or other education systems.

Examination application

- Regularly link learning to examination-style questions, including identifying and briefly explaining ways teacher expectations affect achievement and explaining how labelling may influence pupil behaviour etc.
- Students could practise planning responses using key terms and structured paragraphs before writing full answers.
- Reinforce the importance of using examples drawn from students' own society, as required in extended response questions.

Resources

- GCSE or International GCSE Sociology textbook, Education section
- Short classroom-based scenarios or case studies on labelling and teacher expectations
- Extracts or summaries of interactionist studies on schooling
- Past or specimen examination questions focusing on education and achievement

Weeks Nineteen to Twenty-One – Educational attainment

Specification content

3.1.2.4 Educational attainment

- issues in measuring attainment, including examinations and IQ tests
- credentialism
- differences in educational attainment by social class, gender and ethnicity, including the intersections of these
- explanations of differences in attainment, including material factors, cultural factors, home and community factors and in-school factors
- explanations should draw on sociological perspectives, including functionalism, Marxism and feminism

Learning outcomes

Students should:

- understand different ways educational attainment can be measured and the strengths and limitations of these measures
- explain what is meant by credentialism and why qualifications are increasingly important in modern societies
- describe patterns of educational attainment linked to social class, gender and ethnicity
- recognise how social class, gender and ethnicity can interact to shape educational outcomes
- explain sociological reasons for differences in attainment using a range of perspectives
- apply sociological explanations to examples from their own society or a society they have studied.

Suggested timing

6-7 hours

Possible teaching and learning activities

Measuring educational attainment

- Introduce the idea that attainment can be measured in different ways, beginning with examinations as the most familiar indicator of achievement for students.
- Explore what examinations are designed to measure and what they may fail to capture, such as creativity, practical skills, effort or progress over time.
- Encourage students to consider how exam performance may be affected by factors beyond ability, including stress, language proficiency and access to revision support.
- Introduce IQ tests as an alternative measure, explaining what they aim to measure and how they have been used in education systems.
- Explore criticisms of IQ testing, including cultural bias and the assumption that intelligence is fixed rather than socially shaped.
- Students could be given short statements or scenarios and asked to decide whether they highlight a strength or a limitation of exams or IQ tests, reinforcing evaluation skills.

Credentialism

- Define credentialism clearly as the growing importance of qualifications for access to employment, income and social status.
- Explore why qualifications have become increasingly significant, linking to competition for jobs and the expansion of education systems.

- Discuss how credentialism may advantage some social groups more than others, particularly those with greater access to educational resources and support.
- Encourage students to reflect on entry requirements for jobs or courses in their own society, helping them recognise how credentialism operates in everyday life.
- Link credentialism to Marxist perspectives, focusing on how qualifications can help legitimise inequality by presenting outcomes as fair and merit based.

Differences in attainment by social class

- Introduce broad patterns of attainment by social class, emphasising that these are trends rather than outcomes that apply to every individual.
- Explore how working-class students may experience lower average attainment due to a range of interconnected factors rather than lack of ability.
- Develop material explanations in detail, including income, housing conditions, access to technology, private tuition and quiet study space.
- Introduce cultural explanations such as parental expectations, familiarity with the education system and access to cultural capital.
- Students could compare short profiles of pupils from different class backgrounds and identify how material and cultural factors might shape their educational experiences.
- Link explanations explicitly to Marxist perspectives, reinforcing the idea that education can reproduce class inequality rather than reduce it.

Differences in attainment by gender

- Explore patterns of gendered attainment, including evidence that girls often outperform boys at certain stages of education.
- Discuss possible explanations, including differences in behaviour expectations, teacher attention and classroom interaction.
- Introduce feminist explanations that focus on gender roles, expectations and the hidden curriculum within schools.
- Explore how subject choice and pathways into further education and work may shape long-term attainment differently for males and females.
- Encourage students to reflect on how gender expectations may operate subtly in schools, for example through teacher language, praise or disciplinary practices.

Differences in attainment by ethnicity

- Introduce patterns of attainment linked to ethnicity carefully, stressing the importance of avoiding stereotypes and recognising diversity within ethnic groups.
- Explore how experiences of racism, discrimination and low teacher expectations may affect attainment.
- Link ethnicity to in-school processes such as labelling, stereotyping and the self-fulfilling prophecy, drawing on interactionist ideas.
- Discuss how language, migration experiences and access to support can shape educational outcomes.
- Encourage students to consider how ethnicity intersects with social class and gender, reinforcing that no single factor operates in isolation.

Intersectionality and combined factors

- Draw together social class, gender and ethnicity by introducing the idea that these factors often overlap and interact.
- Explore how a student's educational experience may be shaped differently depending on the combination of factors affecting them.
- Encourage students to move beyond single-factor explanations and develop more nuanced sociological accounts of attainment.
- Use comparative examples to support students in explaining attainment using multiple factors, preparing them for higher-level responses.

In-school factors affecting attainment

- Revisit teacher expectations, labelling and the self-fulfilling prophecy, linking back to earlier learning on interactionism.
- Explore how setting, streaming and school policies may shape attainment over time.
- Discuss how school ethos, behaviour policies and teacher–pupil relationships can affect engagement and achievement.
- Link feminist explanations to classroom interaction and subject choice, reinforcing continuity across the education unit.

Using sociological perspectives

- Consolidate learning by comparing functionalist, Marxist and feminist explanations of educational attainment.
- Encourage students to consider which perspectives are most convincing and why.
- Practise short explanation tasks where students apply a named perspective to a specific attainment pattern.

Examination application

- Use short response questions where students identify and briefly explain reasons for differences in attainment.
- Model how to structure longer answers that explain sociological views using evidence and examples.
- Reinforce the requirement to apply examples from students' own society or another society they know about in extended responses.

Resources

- simplified attainment data or summaries from national or international sources
- short case studies illustrating differences in educational outcomes
- examination-style questions focused on explanations of educational attainment
- comparison grids or visual organisers for sociological perspectives

Weeks Twenty-Two– Global education

Specification content

3.1.2.5 Global education

- Literacy rates and patterns of literacy around the world
- Global differences in educational provision
- The effects of poverty on schools and education
- Gender and other inequalities in access to education
- Inequalities in access to digital education

Learning outcomes

Students should:

- understand how access to education varies between countries and regions
- explain patterns in global literacy rates and educational participation
- explore how poverty affects educational opportunities and outcomes
- examine gender inequalities in education across different societies
- understand the significance of digital access and the digital divide
- apply sociological ideas to real world global examples of education.

Suggested timing

2-3 hours

Possible teaching and learning activities

Introducing global education

- Begin by reinforcing the international focus of the specification, reminding students that sociology examines education across different societies rather than assuming a shared experience of schooling.
- Students could respond to a short stimulus such as an image, short description or headline relating to education in a different society, identifying similarities and differences compared with their own educational experiences.
- Teacher explanation can introduce the idea that education systems are shaped by economic development, culture, politics and history, preparing students to make comparisons throughout the topic.

Global literacy rates

- Teach students what is meant by literacy in a sociological context, including the distinction between basic literacy and functional literacy.
- Use simple tables, maps or short extracts of data showing global literacy rates or international comparisons of educational performance, guiding students to identify broad patterns rather than memorising statistics.
- Teacher explanation can introduce international studies such as PISA as an example of how countries are compared in terms of literacy related skills, without requiring detailed knowledge of the study itself.
- Students could annotate a world map or data table to highlight regions with higher and lower levels of literacy, then suggest social and economic reasons for these patterns.
- Class discussion can focus on why literacy matters, linking literacy to employment opportunities, political participation and wider life chances.

Differences in educational provision around the world

- Introduce the idea that education systems vary widely in structure, funding and quality, emphasising that there is no single global model of education.
- Explore differences in provision such as class sizes, availability of trained teachers, school facilities and access to secondary or higher education.
- Brief case examples can be used to illustrate how educational provision differs between societies, with students identifying advantages and limitations within each example.
- Teacher explanation can refer back to international comparisons, such as those used in PISA rankings, to illustrate how differences in funding, curriculum and teacher training may contribute to different educational outcomes.

The effects of poverty on education

- Teach poverty as a key structural factor shaping access to education globally, linking back to earlier learning on material deprivation.
- Explore how poverty can affect school attendance, educational resources and achievement, including issues such as school fees, transport costs, child labour and health.
- Students could consider which factors linked to poverty most strongly limit access to education, justifying their views using sociological reasoning rather than personal opinion.
- Teacher explanation should emphasise that the effects of poverty on education are often long term and can reinforce wider patterns of inequality between societies.

Gender inequalities in education

- Teach patterns of gender inequality in education, focusing on differences in school attendance, continuation into secondary education and literacy rates.
- Explore social and cultural explanations such as gender roles, early marriage, household responsibilities and expectations about paid and unpaid work.
- Students could compare societies where gender inequalities in education remain significant with those where gaps have narrowed, identifying reasons for these differences and considering how change may occur over time.
- Discussion can reinforce the idea that gender inequality in education has wider consequences for development and social change.

Digital education and the digital divide

- Introduce the concept of digital education and explain the growing importance of technology in teaching and learning worldwide.
- Teach the idea of the digital divide, focusing on inequalities in access to devices, internet connectivity and online learning platforms.
- Students could briefly reflect on their own experiences of online learning and contrast these with examples from societies with limited digital access.
- Teacher explanation should highlight that digital inequality exists both between countries and within countries, linking this back to poverty and global inequality.

Applying global education to examination questions

- Build in regular opportunities for students to practise applying global examples to short and extended response questions.
- Model how students can use simple international examples to support explanations and evaluations, without needing detailed country specific knowledge.
- Emphasise clarity of explanation and sociological reasoning, reinforcing that the examination rewards understanding and application rather than description.

Resources

- Global literacy and education data from organisations such as UNESCO or the World Bank
- World maps and comparative tables showing education indicators
- Short case studies or news extracts on education in different societies
- Examination style questions focused on global education and inequality

Weeks Twenty-Three to Twenty-Five – Research methods: Approaches to research

Specification content

3.1.3.1 Approaches to research

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

Learning outcomes

Students should:

- understand the difference between quantitative and qualitative data
- Explain differences between primary and secondary sources of data
- understand the key features of positivist approaches to sociological research
- understand the key features of interpretivist approaches to sociological research
- begin to consider how different approaches influence the type of data collected and the conclusions sociologists reach.

Suggested timing

8-10 hours

Possible teaching and learning activities

- Begin by introducing students to the idea that sociologists do not all study society in the same way. Students could be asked to consider how we might find out about a social issue such as family life, education or crime, drawing out different possible ways of collecting information. This helps students to recognise early on that research choices shape what sociologists can find out.
- Teach the distinction between quantitative and qualitative data, ensuring students are clear about:
 - what quantitative data looks like, including numerical data, statistics and patterns or trends
 - what qualitative data looks like, including words, meanings, opinions and experiences
 - the types of conclusions that can and cannot be drawn from each form of data.
- Short examples of both types of data could be used, such as a simple table of statistics alongside a short interview extract, with students identifying the type of data and explaining what kind of information it provides.
- Introduce primary and secondary data, explaining:
 - primary data as data collected first-hand by the sociologist for a specific research purpose
 - secondary data as data that already exists and has been collected by someone else
 - typical examples of each type, linking forward to later work on specific research methods.
- Students could be given brief research scenarios and asked to decide whether the data being used is primary or secondary, encouraging them to apply definitions rather than memorise them.

- Introduce positivist approaches to research, focusing on:
 - the belief that society should be studied in a scientific and objective way
 - the use of quantitative data and large-scale research
 - the aim of identifying patterns, trends and cause-and-effect relationships
 - the idea that social facts exist independently of individuals.
- Teaching should explicitly link positivist approaches to familiar examples such as official statistics or large surveys, helping students to see how this approach operates in real sociological research.
- Introduce interpretivist approaches to research, focusing on:
 - the belief that society is socially constructed through meanings and interactions
 - the importance of understanding people's experiences and viewpoints
 - the use of qualitative data
 - the idea that reality is subjective and varies between individuals and groups.
- Students could be encouraged to reflect on everyday situations where understanding feelings or meanings would be more useful than collecting numerical data, reinforcing the purpose of this approach.
- Develop comparison between positivist and interpretivist approaches, ensuring students understand:
 - how the two approaches differ in their view of society
 - the different types of data they prioritise
 - why sociologists may choose one approach over another depending on the research topic.
- This could be reinforced by asking students to decide which approach would be more suitable for researching different sociological issues, such as exam achievement, bullying or family relationships, with justification for their choices.
- Begin to link approaches to assessment skills, particularly short definition questions and brief explanations. Students should practise defining key terms such as quantitative data, qualitative data, primary data and secondary data, using clear and precise language suitable for 2-mark questions.
- Throughout this section, teaching should consistently emphasise that research approaches shape the questions sociologists ask, the data they collect and the conclusions they are able to reach.

Resources

- OxfordAQA International GCSE Sociology Student Book
- Simple data examples, including tables, charts and short qualitative extracts
- Past paper questions focusing on definitions and brief explanations
- Teacher-produced comparison summaries of research approaches

Weeks Twenty-Six to Twenty-Nine – Main research methods and their strengths and limitations

Specification content

Main research methods and their strengths and limitations

- 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:

- understand the main sociological research methods used to collect primary and secondary data
- be able to describe how each research method is used in practice
- understand the strengths and limitations of different research methods
- be able to compare methods in terms of validity, reliability, representativeness and practicality
- apply knowledge of research methods to unfamiliar research contexts and data
- develop skills in evaluating the suitability of different research methods for different sociological investigations.

Suggested timing

6-8 hours

Possible teaching and learning activities

Introducing research methods as sociological tools

- Begin by revisiting the difference between quantitative and qualitative data, linking this explicitly to earlier learning on approaches to research
- Introduce the idea that sociologists must choose research methods carefully depending on what they are trying to investigate, rather than assuming one method is always 'best'
- Use simple everyday examples, such as researching school rules, friendship groups or social media use, to help students consider which methods might be most suitable and why, encouraging them to justify their choices
- Emphasise throughout that no method is perfect and that sociologists must weigh up strengths and limitations, returning to this idea repeatedly as new methods are introduced

Surveys and questionnaires

- Teach surveys and questionnaires as a common method used to collect quantitative data from large numbers of people
- Explain different types of surveys, including postal, telephone, online and self-completion surveys, ensuring students understand how each works in practice and why some are more commonly used today than others
- Introduce types of questions used in questionnaires, including closed questions, open questions and scaled questions, highlighting how wording and structure can shape responses
- Explore strengths such as the ability to collect data from large samples, ease of comparison and potential representativeness
- Explore limitations such as low response rates, superficial data, misunderstandings of questions and social desirability
- Students could design a short questionnaire on a familiar topic, such as study habits or media use, then reflect on which questions worked well and which might produce unreliable or misleading data
- Encourage students to identify how surveys and questionnaires are often used in official research and large-scale social studies, linking this to the use of statistics in the media

Interviews

- Introduce interviews as a method used to collect more detailed qualitative data, particularly when sociologists want to understand meanings, experiences or motivations
- Teach different types of interviews, including structured, unstructured and group interviews, explaining how each is conducted and what type of data it is most likely to produce
- Compare structured interviews to questionnaires, highlighting similarities and differences in terms of reliability and depth
- Explore strengths such as the ability to probe responses, clarify meanings and build rapport with respondents
- Explore limitations including interviewer bias, time constraints, smaller samples and difficulties in replicating results
- Use short interview extracts, brief role-play scenarios or example questions to help students see how responses may differ depending on interview structure
- Encourage discussion of how interviews may be particularly useful when researching sensitive topics or issues that cannot easily be captured through closed questions

Observations and ethnographic approaches

- Introduce observation as a method that involves watching behaviour rather than relying on self-reported data
- Explain participant observation and non-participant observation, ensuring students understand the researcher's role in each and how this may affect the data collected
- Teach the difference between overt and covert observation, including ethical implications and practical challenges
- Explore strengths such as high validity, first-hand data and the ability to study behaviour in natural settings
- Explore limitations such as ethical concerns, lack of representativeness, researcher influence and difficulties in recording data accurately
- Students could observe behaviour in a safe and appropriate setting, such as patterns of movement in a public space or classroom interactions, then reflect on what behaviour can be observed and what cannot
- Link observations to ethnographic research, explaining how long-term immersion can provide rich insights into social groups but also raises practical and ethical issues

Experiments

- Introduce experiments as a method that involves controlling variables to test cause and effect
- Teach laboratory experiments and field experiments, highlighting the differences between artificial and natural settings
- Explore strengths such as control, reliability and the ability to identify causal relationships
- Explore limitations including ethical issues, artificial behaviour and limited generalisability
- Use simple hypothetical examples, such as testing responses to authority or rule-breaking, to help students understand experimental design without needing to conduct an experiment themselves
- Encourage students to consider why experiments are less commonly used in sociology than in the natural sciences

Triangulation and longitudinal studies

- Introduce triangulation as the use of more than one research method to study the same issue
- Explain how triangulation can improve the overall quality of research by balancing strengths and limitations of different methods
- Use examples where surveys might be combined with interviews or observations to show how data can be cross-checked
- Introduce longitudinal studies as research conducted over a long period of time
- Explore strengths such as identifying trends and changes over time
- Explore limitations including cost, time, participant drop-out and difficulties in maintaining consistency across the study

Secondary sources

- Teach qualitative secondary sources such as diaries, letters and personal documents, explaining how these can provide insight into personal experiences
- Teach quantitative secondary sources such as official statistics, highlighting their importance in sociological research
- Explore strengths including accessibility, low cost, large-scale data and the ability to study trends over time
- Explore limitations including lack of control over how data was collected, potential bias and outdated information
- Use examples of official statistics on education, crime or health to practise identifying strengths and limitations and linking these directly to exam-style questions
- Encourage students to consider how secondary data is often used as a starting point for further research rather than as the sole source of evidence

Applying research methods to exam-style contexts

- Regularly practise applying research methods to unfamiliar contexts, similar to those found in examination questions
- Use short data extracts, tables or research scenarios and ask students to identify suitable methods and justify their choices
- Encourage students to link strengths and limitations directly to the context of the research rather than describing them in isolation
- Build confidence in answering short research methods questions as well as longer evaluative questions

Resources

- OxfordAQA International GCSE Sociology Student Book
- Examples of questionnaires and interview schedules
- Short data tables, graphs and extracts for practice
- Exam-style research methods questions and mark schemes

Weeks Thirty to Thirty-Two – Issues in research

Specification content

3.1.3.3 Issues in research

- operationalisation of concepts
- sampling: population and sampling frames
- types of samples: 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

6-8 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.
- Introduce operationalisation as the process of deciding how a concept will be measured in practice, turning ideas into observable or measurable indicators.
- Use familiar topic examples, such as how bullying could be operationalised through reported incidents, observed behaviours or student questionnaires and how different measures may produce different results.
- Encourage students to consider how operational definitions affect validity and reliability, for example how vague definitions may reduce reliability, while narrow measures may fail to capture the full concept.
- A useful teaching approach is to give students a small set of concepts from families and education and ask how these could be operationalised for research purposes.

- To make this explicit, students could observe a short video clip or written scenario and attempt to count specific behaviours, highlighting how unclear definitions lead to inconsistent results between researchers.

Validity and reliability

- Introduce validity as whether research measures what it claims to measure, and reliability as whether the results can be replicated by another researcher.
- Link this directly back to operationalisation, explaining that clearly defined measures improve reliability, while meaningful measures improve validity.
- Use contrasts between methods, such as questionnaires and observations, to show how some methods may be more reliable but less valid, or vice versa.
- Encourage students to judge whether a research design prioritises validity or reliability and explain the trade-offs involved.
- Reinforce that sociologists often have to balance these issues rather than achieve both fully.

Sampling and sampling frames

- Revisit the idea of a population and explain why sociologists usually study samples rather than whole populations.
- Introduce sampling frames as the list or source from which a sample is drawn, emphasising that these are often incomplete or difficult to access.
- To support understanding, students could be presented with different research scenarios, such as researching teachers, parents, young people not in education or extended families, and asked to consider what could realistically be used as a sampling frame in each case.
- Use discussion to highlight which groups may be excluded from certain sampling frames and how this affects representativeness.
- Link this explicitly to exam application by encouraging students to explain how the choice of sampling frame shapes who can and cannot be included in research.

Types of sampling

- Introduce each sampling method using short, practical examples of how participants might actually be recruited.
- Students could be given descriptions of different recruitment approaches, such as selecting every fifth name from a register, approaching people until quotas are filled, or asking participants to recommend others, and asked to match these to the correct sampling method.
- Encourage students to justify their decisions using sociological terminology, reinforcing both understanding and exam technique.
- Use comparison to show why some methods are more practical but less representative, while others aim for representativeness but are harder to carry out in practice.
- Link examples back to families and education topics so students can see how sampling choices depend on the research focus.

Researcher and interviewer bias

- Explain how the researcher's expectations, behaviour or questioning style can influence responses.

- Use interview examples to illustrate how leading questions or tone of voice may affect participants' answers.
- Encourage students to consider how bias can occur unintentionally and how sociologists attempt to reduce it through training, pilot studies or standardised questions.

The Hawthorne Effect and social desirability

- Introduce the Hawthorne Effect as changes in behaviour because people know they are being studied, using examples such as improved behaviour during classroom observations.
- Discuss social desirability in relation to sensitive topics such as crime, family life or study habits, where respondents may want to present themselves positively.
- Link both issues clearly to problems of validity, particularly in interviews, questionnaires and observations.

Practical issues in research

- Explore how time, funding and access influence research design and choice of methods.
- Compare large-scale surveys with small-scale qualitative studies, highlighting why different researchers make different methodological decisions.
- Encourage students to reflect on how practical constraints shape what sociologists can realistically investigate.

Ethical issues in research

- Introduce ethical principles including informed consent, confidentiality, anonymity and protection from harm, ensuring students understand each term in context.
- Students could be presented with short descriptions of sociological studies or hypothetical research scenarios and asked to identify any ethical issues involved.
- Encourage discussion of why researchers might still choose ethically controversial methods, helping students to understand the tension between ethics and data quality.
- Use this as an opportunity to explore the advantages and disadvantages of unethical practices, rather than presenting ethics as a simple checklist.
- Reinforce that ethical considerations shape research design and may limit the methods sociologists are able to use, even if those methods could increase validity.

Causation and correlation

- Teach the difference between correlation and causation using accessible examples from education, health or family life.
- Emphasise why sociologists are cautious about claiming causal relationships, particularly when using quantitative data.
- Link this directly to exam data questions where students must avoid over-interpreting relationships shown in tables or graphs.

Representativeness and generalisability

- Explain representativeness as how closely a sample reflects the wider population.
- Introduce generalisability as the extent to which findings can be applied beyond the sample studied.
- Compare small-scale qualitative studies with large surveys to show the trade-off between depth and breadth.
- Encourage students to practise explaining why some studies cannot be generalised, even if they produce valid and detailed insights.

Throughout this section, students should regularly be encouraged to apply these issues to specific research methods and to unseen data, reflecting the structure and demands of the examination papers.

Resources

- OxfordAQA International GCSE Sociology specification
- Sample examination papers and mark schemes
- Short video clips or written scenarios for observation and operationalisation tasks
- Simple data sets, tables and graphs for interpretation practice
- Key terminology glossaries for research methods

Weeks Thirty-Three to Thirty-Five – Interpretation of data

Specification content

3.1.3.4 Interpretation of data

- 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:

- understand the difference between quantitative and qualitative data in terms of format, purpose and use
- be able to accurately extract information from tables, charts and graphs
- identify patterns, trends and comparisons within quantitative data
- interpret qualitative data by identifying meanings, viewpoints and social contexts
- evaluate data by considering validity, reliability, representativeness and potential bias
- recognise how sampling methods may affect the usefulness of data
- apply sociological knowledge and concepts when interpreting data rather than simply describing it
- develop confidence in answering data interpretation questions in Paper 1 Section C.

Suggested timing

6-8 hours

Possible teaching and learning activities

Introducing interpretation of data in sociology

- Begin by reinforcing the idea that sociological data does not speak for itself and must be interpreted. Clarify the distinction between *description* and *interpretation*, using simple examples such as crime figures, school attendance data or class size statistics.
- Students could first describe what a dataset shows, then be prompted to explain what it suggests about society, encouraging them to move beyond surface-level observations.
- Emphasise that interpretation often involves linking data to sociological explanations, concepts and issues, as well as questioning the quality of the data itself.

Interpreting quantitative data: strengths and limitations

- Teach students how quantitative data is commonly presented, including tables, bar charts, line graphs and comparative data across countries, groups or time periods.
- Use a range of datasets for repeated practice, asking students to identify key features such as highest and lowest values, trends over time and significant differences between groups.
- Build in explicit discussion of what type of data is being used and why sociologists might choose quantitative data for certain research aims.
- Students could be given a dataset and asked structured questions focusing on both interpretation and evaluation, such as what patterns are shown, what explanations might account for them and what the data does not show.

- Encourage students to consider issues such as validity and reliability, for example whether the data measures what it claims to measure or whether it is collected consistently.
- Sampling and representativeness can be introduced by asking students who the data represents, who might be excluded and how this affects the conclusions that can be drawn.
- These activities help students practise linking strengths such as large sample sizes and comparability with limitations such as lack of depth or context.

Interpreting qualitative data: strengths, limitations and representativeness

- Introduce qualitative data by explaining how sociologists use interviews, field notes and personal accounts to explore meanings, experiences and social realities.
- Provide short extracts from unstructured interviews or observational notes and guide students in identifying key themes, attitudes and viewpoints.
- Students could annotate extracts to highlight evidence of beliefs, emotions or social experiences, then discuss what these suggest about the group or issue being studied.
- Encourage students to think critically about validity by considering how honest or open participants may have been and how the presence of a researcher might influence responses.
- Build in discussion of sampling by asking students how many people the extract represents and whether the findings can be generalised.
- Students could be prompted to consider potential problems such as researcher bias, lack of representativeness or difficulty replicating findings, alongside strengths such as depth and richness of data.

Comparing and evaluating different types of data

- Use activities where students are given both quantitative and qualitative data on the same issue, such as education, health or family life.
- Students could discuss what each dataset reveals and what it fails to show, helping them understand why sociologists often use mixed methods.
- This can be extended into short written tasks where students explain which type of data is more useful for particular research aims and why.
- Encourage students to link their evaluations to concepts such as triangulation, validity and representativeness.

Applying interpretation skills to exam-style questions

- Regularly use unseen data in lessons to normalise interpretation skills and build confidence over time.
- Model how to approach structured exam questions, including reading the data carefully, identifying command words and selecting relevant information.
- Students could practise annotating datasets with notes about patterns, strengths and limitations before writing answers.
- Include questions that explicitly ask students to identify strengths or limitations of data, ensuring they link their answer directly to the source provided.
- Peer assessment using mark schemes can help students understand how interpretation and evaluation are rewarded in the exam.

Year Two

Overview for year two

Year Two builds on the foundational knowledge and skills developed in Year One and focuses on more complex sociological issues relating to inequality, identity, power and social control. Students are required to apply sociological concepts, theories and evidence more independently and to develop more analytical and evaluative responses.

Students study **Differences and Inequalities**, examining how sociologists classify social groups and explain inequalities in power and life chances. This unit introduces and develops key perspectives including Marxism, feminism and Weberian approaches, with a strong emphasis on social class, gender and ethnicity in different societies. Students are encouraged to consider intersectionality and to use global and comparative examples to support their understanding.

The study of **Socialisation and Social Control** allows students to explore how individuals become members of society and how behaviour is regulated through formal and informal mechanisms. This unit develops students' understanding of culture, identity, crime and deviance and the role of agencies such as families, schools, media and the criminal justice system. Students examine sociological perspectives on social control and consider how norms, values and sanctions operate differently across societies and over time.

Research Methods is revisited and extended during Year Two, with a focus on applying methodological knowledge to unfamiliar sociological contexts and developing examination technique. Students practise interpreting quantitative and qualitative data, evaluating research methods and using methodological concepts accurately in extended responses. This supports preparation for the Research Methods sections in both examination papers.

Throughout Year Two, students are encouraged to make connections between topics, apply sociological ideas synoptically and develop confidence in constructing well-supported arguments. Regular opportunities should be provided for examination practice, including extended response questions and structured data-based questions.

By the end of Year Two, students should be able to apply sociological knowledge and research methods confidently to a range of social issues and contexts and to demonstrate the analytical and evaluative skills required for success in **Paper 2: Exploring Sociology** and the overall qualification.

Weeks One to two – Differences and inequalities: differences

Specification content

3.2.1.1 Differences

- How sociologists classify groups of people by:
 - social class
 - status
 - caste
 - slavery
 - sex and gender
 - race and ethnicity
 - age and generation/cohort
 - religion
 - ability and disability
 - nationality.
- ways in which individuals identify with groups
- individual and collective identities

Learning outcomes

Students should:

- understand that societies are made up of a wide range of social groups and categories
- be able to explain different ways sociologists classify people within and between societies
- recognise similarities and differences between biological and social classifications
- understand how identities are shaped by social group membership
- be able to distinguish between individual identity and collective identity
- apply sociological ideas about difference to examples from their own society and other societies.

Suggested timing

4-6 hours

Possible teaching and learning activities

Introducing difference in society

- Begin with a short discussion activity asking students to identify visible and non-visible differences between people in everyday life, encouraging ideas such as age, beliefs, language, roles, gender or nationality.
- Use this as a starting point to introduce the sociological idea that difference is not only personal but socially organised and classified.
- Teacher explanation introducing the concept of social classification and why sociologists study difference, linking this to patterns of behaviour, identity and social experience rather than value judgements.
- Students could be shown brief descriptions of people from different societies and asked to identify which social classifications are most relevant in each case, reinforcing that categories may matter differently in different contexts.

Social class, status, caste and slavery

- Teach social class as a system of stratification linked to economic position, occupation and access to resources, noting that class systems vary across societies and over time.
- Introduce status as a form of social ranking based on prestige, honour or lifestyle, which may or may not be linked to wealth, using culturally appropriate examples chosen by the teacher.
- Explain caste as a system where social position is fixed at birth and movement between groups is limited, emphasising that this system exists in some societies rather than being universal.
- Introduce slavery as a form of social classification where individuals are owned and denied rights, making clear that this can be studied historically and in contemporary global contexts where appropriate.
- Students could be given short case studies of different societies or historical periods and asked to identify which forms of classification are present, encouraging comparison without prioritising one system as the norm.
- Teacher-led discussion can explore how far movement between groups is possible in each system and what this suggests about social structure and opportunity.

Sex and gender

- Introduce sex as a biological classification and gender as a social classification shaped by roles, expectations and cultural norms.
- Emphasise that ideas about gender vary across societies and historical periods.
- Students could analyse short scenarios or role descriptions showing gender expectations in different contexts and discuss how these expectations shape behaviour and opportunities.
- Teacher explanation should reinforce that sociologists focus on how gender is socially constructed rather than making assumptions about what is natural or fixed.

Race and ethnicity

- Explain race as a socially constructed idea based on perceived physical differences rather than a biological reality
- Teach ethnicity as a shared cultural identity linked to language, traditions, history, religion or ancestry.
- Use examples to show that ethnic identities can be multiple, fluid and context dependent.
- Students could be asked to identify examples of shared cultural practices within ethnic groups in their society or a society they have studied, linking this to collective identity.

Age and generation or cohort

- Introduce age as a social category shaped by expectations about behaviour, responsibility and status at different life stages.
- Explain generations or cohorts as groups of people born at similar times who may share experiences shaped by social or historical events.
- Students could compare expectations placed on young people, adults and older people in different societies, highlighting how age is socially organised rather than purely biological.
- Teacher explanation can draw attention to how age-based identities may change over time as societies change.

Religion, ability and disability, nationality

- Teach religion as a source of identity based on shared beliefs, values and practices, noting that its importance varies across societies.
- Introduce ability and disability as social classifications, emphasising that disability is shaped not only by impairment but also by social barriers and attitudes.
- Explain nationality as a legal and political classification linked to citizenship, rights and belonging to a nation state.

- Students could work in small groups to explore how one of these classifications might shape everyday experiences such as education, work or social participation in a chosen society.

Individual and collective identity

- Introduce individual identity as how people see themselves, shaped by personal experiences, choices and social context.
- Teach collective identity as a shared sense of belonging to a group based on common characteristics, values or experiences.
- Students could complete a simple identity mapping activity, selecting which aspects of identity are most important to them in different situations, while being reminded that sharing is voluntary.
- Teacher-led discussion can explore how individuals may belong to multiple groups at the same time and how identities can overlap, shift or sometimes conflict.

Resources

- Short written scenarios representing individuals or groups from different societies, suitable for 4 mark identify and explain questions.
- Regular practice defining key terms such as social class, ethnicity, gender and collective identity using exam-style 2-mark questions.
- Structured discussion and planning tasks to support 6- and 8-mark questions on the importance of different social divisions.
- Opportunities for students to apply sociological ideas to their own society or another society they know, reflecting the expectations of extended response questions in the examination.
- Provide quantitative and qualitative data for students to apply sociological knowledge and understanding of research methods.

Weeks Three - Four - Inequalities

Specification content

3.2.1.2 Inequalities

- Inequalities in power and in life-chances: employment; education; health; life expectancy; social mobility
- Intersectionality and the impacts on individuals
- How inequalities affect people and society

Learning outcomes

Students should:

- understand what sociologists mean by inequality and life chances
- recognise how power is distributed unequally in society
- be able to explain how inequalities affect different areas of life
- understand the concept of intersectionality and why it matters
- be able to apply ideas about inequality to real social examples
- begin to evaluate the social consequences of inequality.

Suggested timing

4-6 hours

Possible teaching and learning activities

Introducing inequality and life chances

- Start by asking students what they think inequality means, allowing a range of answers before drawing out that sociologists are interested in unequal access to opportunities, not just income or wealth.
- Teacher explanation introducing life chances as the likelihood of achieving positive outcomes in areas such as education, health, employment and housing, shaped by social factors rather than individual choices alone.
- Students could be given two or three short profiles of people with different backgrounds and asked to discuss how their life chances might differ, encouraging them to justify their reasoning.

Inequalities in power

- Introduce power as the ability to influence decisions, control resources and shape outcomes, stressing that power can operate at both an individual and structural level.
- Teacher-led discussion exploring who tends to hold power in society and why, with prompts linked to institutions students are familiar with, such as schools, workplaces or government.
- Students could consider examples where some groups have more say than others, helping to ground abstract ideas of power in everyday situations.

Inequalities across areas of life

- Explore how inequalities are visible across key areas including employment, education, health and life expectancy, making clear that these patterns are consistent and measurable.

- Students could be shown simple statistics, charts or written scenarios and asked to identify what inequalities are present before discussing possible explanations.
- Emphasise that sociologists focus on trends affecting groups, which helps to avoid blaming individuals for unequal outcomes.

Intersectionality

- Introduce intersectionality as a way of understanding how different forms of inequality can overlap and interact in people's lives.
- Teacher explanation highlighting that individuals are not affected by one single factor but may experience multiple disadvantages at the same time.
- Students could work in pairs on short case studies, identifying which inequalities are present and discussing how these might combine to shape life chances.

Effects of inequality on individuals and society

- Explore how inequality can affect individuals, including impacts on health, wellbeing, confidence and access to opportunities.
- Extend this to society as a whole by considering issues such as social cohesion, social mobility and tensions between groups.
- Students could be encouraged to discuss whether inequality is inevitable or whether it can be reduced, helping to prepare them for evaluative examination questions.

Resources

- Use short extracts from official statistics, news reports or simplified datasets to support understanding of inequality in real societies
- Build regular opportunities for low-stakes retrieval of key terms such as life chances, power and intersectionality
- Practise 4- and 6-mark explanation questions focusing on inequalities in specific areas of life
- Gradually introduce 8-mark questions, encouraging students to apply ideas to examples from their own society or a society they know about

Weeks Five to Seven – Social class

Specification content

3.2.1.3 Social class

- Marxism, including:
 - social classes and class conflict
 - exploitation
 - false consciousness
- Functionalism, including:
 - the functional necessity of class inequality
 - meritocracy
- Weberianism, including:
 - class
 - status
 - party
- Ways of measuring social class
- Wealth and income, including global comparisons and changes over time
- Social mobility, including:
 - upward and downward social mobility
 - social mobility within and between generations
 - factors affecting social mobility

Learning outcomes

Students should:

- understand how sociologists define social class and why it matters
- explain different sociological views of class inequality
- recognise how wealth and income are distributed unequally within and between societies
- understand different ways social class can be measured and the limitations of these measures
- explain different types of social mobility and the factors that shape life chances
- apply ideas about social class to examples from their own society or one they are familiar with
- develop confidence in using sociological terminology accurately in written responses.

Suggested timing

6-8 hours

Possible teaching and learning activities

Introducing social class and inequality

- Begin with a discussion exploring what students already think social class means. This could include prompts such as where people live, what jobs they do, how much they earn, or the opportunities they have.
- Encourage students to consider whether everyone in society has the same chances and why this might not be the case.
- Use short, relatable examples such as differences in housing quality, access to private tuition, or healthcare to illustrate inequality without requiring prior sociological knowledge.
- Students could work in pairs with short fictional profiles and identify possible advantages and disadvantages in each person's life.

- Teacher explanation introducing social class as one of the main ways sociologists explain inequality and unequal life chances.

Marxism and social class

- Introduce Marxism by explaining that Marxists see society as divided into social classes based on ownership of wealth and businesses.
- Clarify the terms bourgeoisie and proletariat using modern examples such as business owners and employees.
- Explain exploitation in simple terms as workers producing more value than they are paid for.
- Introduce class conflict as the ongoing tension between those who own wealth and those who sell their labour.
- False consciousness can be explained using everyday examples, such as workers blaming themselves rather than the system for low pay or poor conditions.
- Students could be given a short workplace scenario and asked to identify who benefits most and how a Marxist would explain this.
- Discussion around whether students think class conflict still exists today or whether society has changed.

Functionalism and class inequality

- Introduce functionalism as a perspective that sees society as working like a system, where each part has a function.
- Explain the idea that inequality exists because some roles are more important or require more skill or training.
- Meritocracy can be clarified using school-based examples such as exams, grades and progression to jobs.
- Students could discuss whether they think effort and ability always lead to success, or whether other factors also play a role.
- Brief comparison with Marxism, highlighting how the two perspectives offer very different explanations of inequality.

Weberian views of class, status and party

- Explain that Weber agreed class mattered but argued that inequality is more complex than just money.
- Class can be linked to income and economic position, while status refers to social prestige or respect.
- Party can be explained as the ability to influence decisions, for example through politics or organisations.
- Use clear examples such as celebrities, politicians, professionals or business owners to illustrate differences between class and status.
- Students could sort example occupations or individuals into class, status and party categories to reinforce understanding.
- Discussion about whether Weber's ideas help explain inequalities that Marxism does not fully address.

Measuring social class

- Introduce different ways of measuring social class, such as occupation, income, education and wealth.
- Explain why measuring class can be difficult, as people may not fit neatly into one category.
- Students could compare how the same individual might be classified differently depending on the measure used.
- Teacher explanation highlighting that sociologists disagree about the best way to measure class.

Wealth, income and global inequality

- Clearly distinguish between income (money earned regularly) and wealth (assets such as property or savings).
- Use simple examples to show why wealth inequality is often greater and more long-lasting than income inequality.
- Introduce basic global comparisons to show differences between richer and poorer countries.
- Students could interpret a simple chart or table showing income or wealth differences and identify patterns.
- Discussion around why some countries are wealthier than others and how history, resources or policies may contribute.

Social mobility

- Introduce social mobility as movement up or down the social scale.
- Explain upward and downward mobility using clear, everyday examples.
- Intergenerational mobility can be illustrated through changes between parents' and children's occupations.
- Intragenerational mobility can be explained through changes within a person's own lifetime.
- Students could map simple family stories to identify different types of mobility.
- Teach key factors affecting social mobility, such as education, family background, economic conditions and government policies.
- Discussion around whether social mobility is realistic in their society and what barriers may exist.

Applying social class to examination questions

- Students practise short exam questions defining key terms such as social class, meritocracy or social mobility.
- Model how to write longer answers that compare sociological perspectives, using sentence starters if needed.
- Students could plan an extended response to a question on the importance of social class, using examples from their own society.
- Peer review activities focusing on clarity, use of concepts and explanation rather than just length.

Resources

- Simplified summaries of Marxist, functionalist and Weberian ideas.
- Short case studies or news articles illustrating class inequality.
- Basic data sets showing income, wealth or social mobility for interpretation practice (applying knowledge and understanding of research methods).
- Past paper and specimen questions linked directly to social class content.
- Writing frames and model paragraphs to support extended responses.

Weeks Eight and Nine – Gender

Specification content

3.2.1.4 Gender

- Feminist views of patriarchy
- Roles, status and power of men and women in different societies
- Sexism and sex discrimination
- The 'glass ceiling' in employment

Learning outcomes

Students should:

- Understand what sociologists mean by patriarchy and how feminist perspectives explain gender inequality
- Be able to describe and explain differences in the roles, status and power of men and women within and across societies
- Understand how sexism and sex discrimination operate in everyday life and within institutions such as education and employment
- Be able to explain the concept of the glass ceiling and apply it to patterns of gender inequality in work
- Apply sociological ideas about gender to their own society and to societies they have studied

Suggested timing

5-6 hours

Possible teaching and learning activities

Introducing gender as a social division

- Begin by revisiting the distinction between sex and gender, ensuring students clearly understand gender as socially constructed rather than biologically fixed. This can be supported through short examples such as differences in clothing expectations, career aspirations or behaviour that are encouraged or discouraged for boys and girls.
- Students could be asked to generate a quick list of expectations placed on men and women in their society, for example around work, family roles, emotional behaviour or appearance. These ideas can then be used to highlight how gender norms shape everyday life.
- Teacher explanation introducing gender as a key social division linked to inequality in power, status and life chances, explicitly connecting this to earlier work on inequality so that students see gender as part of a wider sociological picture rather than an isolated topic.

Feminist views of patriarchy

- Teach patriarchy as a system of male dominance in which men hold greater power over economic resources, political decision making and social institutions. Emphasise that feminists see this as structural rather than the result of individual attitudes alone.
- Feminist perspectives can be introduced in an accessible way by focusing on shared ideas, such as the belief that gender inequality is socially created and maintained through institutions like the family, education and the workplace.

- Use everyday examples to illustrate patriarchy, such as men being over-represented in positions of political leadership or senior management, while women are more likely to take responsibility for unpaid domestic and caring work.
- Students could be given brief scenarios describing family life, workplaces or public institutions and asked to identify where patriarchal power may be operating, encouraging them to apply the concept rather than simply define it.
- Throughout this section, model how patriarchy can be used directly in exam answers, for example when explaining gender inequality in a 6-mark question or evaluating the extent of inequality in an 8-mark response.

Roles, status and power of men and women

- Explore traditional and contemporary gender roles, including expectations around paid employment, domestic labour and caring responsibilities, making clear that these roles have changed over time but have not disappeared entirely.
- Teacher explanation should highlight how gender roles often lead to differences in status, for example where paid work is valued more highly than unpaid caring roles, which are more commonly carried out by women.
- Comparisons between societies can be introduced here, such as differences in women's access to education, employment or political participation, reinforcing the international focus of the specification.
- Students could examine short statements, images or data extracts showing gender differences in different societies and discuss what these suggest about power and status.
- Discussion can then be drawn back to decision making, encouraging students to consider who holds power within families, workplaces or governments and how this reflects wider gender inequalities.

Sexism and sex discrimination

- Clearly define sexism as prejudiced beliefs or attitudes about gender, and sex discrimination as unfair treatment based on gender, ensuring students understand the distinction between the two.
- Use contemporary and relatable examples, such as gender stereotypes in advertising, unequal pay or expectations around subject choices in school, to show how sexism and discrimination operate in everyday life.
- Students could be presented with a range of short examples and asked to decide whether each represents sexism, discrimination or both, justifying their answers using sociological language.
- Teacher explanation should emphasise that sexism and discrimination can be overt or subtle and may be embedded within institutions, linking back to feminist views of structural inequality.

The glass ceiling in employment

- Introduce the glass ceiling as an invisible barrier that prevents women from reaching the highest positions in organisations, even when they have similar qualifications or experience to men.
- Use clear examples, such as the under-representation of women in senior management, politics or corporate leadership, to make the concept concrete and accessible.
- Students could analyse simple statistics or headlines showing gender gaps at senior levels and discuss possible explanations, including discrimination, gendered expectations and patriarchal structures.
- Teacher explanation should link the glass ceiling to wider issues of power and status, reinforcing how it fits within feminist explanations of gender inequality rather than being a standalone idea.
- Students can practise applying the concept by explaining how the glass ceiling operates in a society they are familiar with, supporting exam-focused skills.

Exam application and skills focus

- Throughout the topic, regularly reinforce the need to apply gender concepts to real societies, modelling how this can be done clearly and effectively in extended responses.
- Use short planning or discussion tasks where students outline how they would approach questions on patriarchy, gender roles or the glass ceiling, focusing on linking concepts to examples.
- Encourage accurate use of key sociological terms and explicit links to power, status and inequality, helping students to develop more confident and analytical exam responses.

Resources

- Newspaper articles and reports on gender inequality, pay gaps and women in leadership
- Short statistical summaries showing gender differences in education, employment or political representation
- Case studies or brief profiles illustrating gender roles in different societies
- Exam-style questions and mark schemes to support structured practice and exam preparation

Weeks Ten to Eleven – Ethnicity

Specification content

3.2.1.5 Ethnicity

- Differences between race and ethnicity
- Apartheid systems
- Legacies of colonialism and enslavement
- Racism and institutional racism
- Assimilation and multiculturalism
- Diasporas and hybrid identities

Learning outcomes

Students should:

- Understand why sociologists distinguish between race and ethnicity and why this distinction is important
- Be able to explain how historical processes such as colonialism and enslavement continue to shape ethnic inequalities today
- Develop an understanding of racism, including institutional racism and how it operates within organisations
- Be able to compare assimilation and multiculturalism as different responses to ethnic diversity
- Understand how diasporas and hybrid identities influence individual and collective identities
- Apply sociological concepts to examples from their own society and other societies, particularly in extended responses.

Suggested timing

4-6 hours

Possible teaching and learning activities

Race, ethnicity and identity

- Begin by encouraging students to think broadly about identity and belonging before introducing sociological concepts, for example asking them to consider what groups they feel part of and which aspects of identity feel chosen or imposed.
- Introduce the distinction between race and ethnicity, emphasising that race is socially constructed and historically linked to ideas about biology, while ethnicity relates to shared culture, language, religion and traditions.
- Students could be given short descriptions of individuals or groups and asked to decide whether the information relates to race, ethnicity or both, explaining their reasoning.
- Use this as an opportunity to reinforce the importance of precise sociological language and how confusion between race and ethnicity can lead to stereotyping and discrimination.

Apartheid systems

- Introduce apartheid as a system of legally enforced racial segregation, using South Africa as a clear example while stressing that similar systems have existed elsewhere.
- Explain how apartheid shaped access to housing, education, employment and political power, linking this directly to inequalities in life chances.

- Students could analyse short written or visual sources showing everyday life under apartheid and identify how laws structured social experiences differently for different racial groups.
- A brief discussion could ask students to consider whether inequalities can still exist in societies where segregation is no longer written into law, linking to other work on institutional racism.

Colonialism and enslavement

- Introduce colonialism and enslavement as long-term historical processes rather than isolated events.
- Explain how economic exploitation, cultural domination and the disruption of indigenous societies created patterns of inequality that continue into the present.
- Students could explore short case studies from different regions, identifying similarities in how colonial histories have shaped education systems, wealth distribution or political power.
- Encourage students to practise linking past and present by explaining how historical disadvantage can continue to influence life chances today.

Racism and institutional racism

- Define racism as prejudice or discrimination based on perceived racial or ethnic difference.
- Extend this to institutional racism, focusing on how organisations may systematically disadvantage certain ethnic groups even without overtly racist intentions.
- Students could be given a series of short scenarios drawn from education, policing or employment and asked to identify whether each reflects individual racism, institutional racism or both.
- Discussion can then focus on why institutional racism is often harder to identify and challenge, linking this to sociological ideas about power and inequality.

Assimilation and multiculturalism

- Introduce assimilation as the expectation that minority ethnic groups should adopt the dominant culture of the society they live in.
- Contrast this with multiculturalism, which recognises and values cultural diversity within society.
- Students could compare the potential advantages and disadvantages of each approach, considering issues such as social cohesion, equality and identity.
- A short evaluative task could involve students explaining which approach they think is more effective in a named society and why, helping to develop balanced reasoning skills.

Diasporas and hybrid identities

- Explain diasporas as communities that have migrated from an original homeland but maintain cultural links across generations and national boundaries.
- Introduce hybrid identities as identities that combine elements from different cultures rather than belonging to a single fixed identity.
- Students could explore everyday examples such as food, music, language or fashion that reflect hybrid identities, helping to make the concept concrete and accessible.
- Discussion could focus on how hybrid identities challenge traditional ideas about culture, nationality and belonging.

Exam skills and application

- Throughout the topic, students should practise applying concepts to examples from their own society or a society they know, reflecting the requirements of extended response questions.
- Short exam-style questions can be used to practise defining key terms such as ethnicity, institutional racism or diaspora with precision.

- Students could plan or write brief paragraphs explaining how historical factors such as colonialism continue to influence ethnic inequalities today, developing clear chains of reasoning.

Resources

- News articles and documentaries exploring racism, migration and ethnic identity
- Short written case studies on apartheid, colonialism or multicultural policies
- Visual sources such as photographs or infographics showing patterns of inequality linked to ethnicity
- Exam-style questions focusing on explanation and application
- Structured discussion activities to support confident use of sociological terminology

Weeks Twelve to Fourteen – Attempts to reduce or eliminate inequalities

Specification content

3.2.1.6 Attempts to reduce/ eliminate inequalities

- Marxism: abolition of capitalism
- Social democratic welfare states
- Development aid

Learning outcomes

Students should:

- understand different sociological approaches to reducing or eliminating inequality
- explain how Marxist ideas aim to address inequality at a structural level
- understand how welfare states attempt to reduce inequalities in life chances
- describe the role of development aid in reducing global inequalities
- recognise that different approaches vary in effectiveness and are open to criticism
- apply examples from their own society or global contexts to support explanations.

Suggested timing

6-8 hours

Possible teaching and learning activities

Introducing responses to inequality

- Begin by asking students to reflect on earlier learning about inequality and consider whether inequalities are inevitable or whether societies can reduce them.
- Students could briefly discuss which inequalities they think are most urgent to address and why, helping to link this topic to education, health and life chances studied earlier.
- This provides a natural transition from describing inequalities to examining how societies respond to them.

Marxism and the abolition of capitalism

- Introduce the Marxist view that inequality is rooted in capitalism, particularly in the ownership of the means of production and the exploitation of labour.
- Explain how Marxists argue that reforms do not go far enough and that abolishing capitalism is necessary to remove class inequality.
- Students could be asked to explain this process step by step, showing how capitalism leads to class divisions and unequal power.
- Discussion can explore whether removing capitalism would eliminate all inequalities or whether divisions such as gender and ethnicity might still exist.

Social democratic welfare states

- Introduce welfare states as systems in which governments intervene to reduce inequality through services such as healthcare, education, housing and income support.
- Explain that social democratic approaches aim to reduce inequalities in life chances rather than eliminate class differences entirely.
- Students could identify examples of welfare provision within their own society and consider how these policies may improve access to opportunities.

- Simple comparative scenarios can be used to illustrate how access to welfare services may shape health, education and employment outcomes.
- Brief evaluation can consider debates around the cost of welfare and whether it always reaches those most in need.

Development aid and global inequality

- Introduce development aid as an attempt to reduce inequalities between countries, particularly between wealthier and poorer societies.
- Explain that aid may focus on immediate relief or longer-term development, such as improving access to clean water, healthcare or education.
- Students could examine short descriptions of aid projects and identify which inequalities they are intended to address.
- Discussion may focus on whether development aid tackles the root causes of inequality or mainly reduces its effects.

Comparing approaches to inequality

- Encourage students to compare the three approaches by considering their aims, methods and limitations.
- Rather than a formal comparison task, students could be asked to justify which approach they believe is most effective and explain their reasoning.

Resources (& examination application?)

- Brief summaries of Marxist theory related to class and inequality
- Case study material on welfare provision and development aid
- Data showing inequalities in income, education or life expectancy across societies
- Practice questions requiring explanation or evaluation of attempts to reduce inequality, supported by examples
- Exam-style practice can focus on explaining one approach clearly before developing balanced judgements across approaches.??

Weeks Fifteen to Seventeen – Individuals and society

Specification content

3.2.2.1 Individuals and society

- 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:

- understand how culture shapes behaviour, identity and expectations in different societies
- be able to explain how norms and values influence roles, status and social behaviour
- recognise how stereotypes and subcultures shape identity and social interaction
- understand that individuals belong to multiple social groups at the same time
- apply the sociological imagination to explain how individual experiences are linked to wider social structures.

Suggested timing

6-8 hours

Possible teaching and learning activities

Culture, norms, values, roles and identity

- Introduce culture as a shared way of life by exploring everyday, taken-for-granted behaviours. Students could identify behaviours that are expected, encouraged or discouraged in their society and compare these with examples from other societies to highlight that norms and values are socially constructed rather than universal.
- Use contrasting cultural case studies to deepen understanding. Students might explore differences between a small-scale or tribal society and a highly industrialised or technologically advanced society, focusing on family organisation, authority, education, work and community responsibilities. Students draw out how material conditions and shared values shape everyday behaviour and social expectations.
- Develop understanding of norms and values by distinguishing clearly between the two. Students could be given examples of behaviour from different societies and asked to identify the underlying value and the specific norm that expresses it, reinforcing the idea that values are abstract beliefs while norms are concrete rules or expectations.
- Explore roles and status through cross-cultural comparison. Students might compare the status of elders, leaders or children in two contrasting societies and consider how roles are learned, maintained and enforced, as well as how status may be ascribed or achieved depending on the social context.
- When teaching stereotypes, encourage students to consider how stereotypes vary between societies and over time. Students could analyse how particular groups are viewed differently depending on cultural context and discuss the potential impact of stereotypes on opportunities, treatment and self-identity.
- Introduce subcultures by examining how smaller groups form within wider societies. Students could compare youth or lifestyle subcultures in industrial societies with group

identities in more traditional societies, helping them understand how belonging, identity and difference are shaped by social structure.

The sociological imagination

- Introduce the sociological imagination by making a clear distinction between individual explanations and sociological explanations. Students should understand that individual explanations focus on personal choices, attitudes or behaviour, whereas sociological explanations examine how wider social structures, institutions, culture and power shape individual experiences and outcomes.
- This can be developed by starting with a familiar issue such as educational success, unemployment or health. Students generate individual explanations first, before re-framing the issue using sociological factors such as social class, gender, cultural expectations, economic conditions or government policy.
- Use cross-cultural examples to make this distinction clearer. Students could compare the life chances of a young person in a tribal society with those of a young person in a technologically advanced society, focusing on access to education, healthcare, work or technology. This allows students to link personal experiences to wider social patterns.
- Develop understanding further by asking students to categorise explanations as either personal troubles or public issues. For example, students might explore how unemployment can be explained by individual effort but also by structural factors such as economic change, globalisation or state policy.
- As a consolidation activity, students could rewrite everyday statements in sociological terms, explicitly linking individual behaviour or outcomes to culture, social structures or institutions. This reinforces the shift from common-sense explanations to sociological thinking.

Resources

- Short cultural case studies, comparative tables or visual summaries can support understanding of differences between societies and help students organise ideas clearly.
- Exam practice may include 4-mark questions focused on explaining how culture, norms or stereotypes influence behaviour, or 6-mark questions requiring explanation of how individual experiences are shaped by wider social factors.
- Students should be encouraged to use examples from their own society or societies they are familiar with when applying the sociological imagination in extended responses.

Weeks Eighteen to Twenty-One – Socialisation

Specification content

3.2.2.2 Socialisation

- Primary and secondary socialisation; re-socialisation; inadequate socialisation
- The social construction of identities through socialisation
- Agencies of socialisation: families, schools, peers, media, religions and the workplace
- Processes/methods used by agencies of socialisation
- Sociological perspectives on socialisation: functionalist; Marxist; feminist; social action/interactionist

Learning outcomes

Students should:

- understand what is meant by socialisation and why it is essential for society
- distinguish between primary, secondary and re-socialisation
- explain how identities are socially constructed through social interaction
- identify the role of different agencies of socialisation
- understand the processes and methods used to socialise individuals
- apply sociological perspectives to explanations of socialisation
- use examples from their own society or others to illustrate socialisation.

Suggested timing

8-10 hours

Possible teaching and learning activities

Understanding socialisation

- Establish socialisation as the process through which individuals learn the norms, values, roles and expectations of society.
- Reinforce the sociological view that behaviour is learned rather than instinctive, linking back to earlier work on culture, norms and values.
- Apply functionalist ideas here by showing how shared norms and values are seen as essential for social order and social cohesion.
- Students could identify everyday norms they have learned that help society function smoothly, reinforcing the link between socialisation and stability.

Types of socialisation

- Explore primary socialisation through the role of the family, focusing on early childhood learning such as language development, discipline and expectations around behaviour.
- This provides a natural opportunity to briefly revisit ideas from the families topic, particularly the transmission of norms, values and gender roles, reinforcing continuity across the specification rather than introducing new content in isolation.
- Feminist perspectives can be embedded by examining how traditional gender roles may be learned through family expectations and role modelling.
- Develop secondary socialisation by examining how learning continues through schools, peer groups, media, religion and the workplace.
- Introduce re-socialisation using examples such as joining the military, entering prison, starting a new job or moving to a different society, emphasising how old norms may be challenged and replaced.

- Social action approaches fit well here, highlighting how individuals respond differently to re-socialisation rather than passively accepting new identities.
- Explain inadequate socialisation, focusing on how disrupted or ineffective socialisation may lead to difficulties conforming to social norms, with careful links forward to later work on deviance and social control without implying inevitability.
- A short, embedded activity could involve scenario cards where students identify the type of socialisation being demonstrated and justify their choice.

Social construction of identity

- Develop understanding of identity as socially constructed rather than fixed, using examples of gender, age and behaviour that vary across societies and over time.
- Feminist perspectives can be revisited here to explore how gender identities are shaped through socialisation in families, schools and the media.
- Social action approaches can be used to emphasise how identity is shaped through everyday interaction, labelling and shared meanings.
- Students could compare expectations of identity across different societies familiar to them, reinforcing the international focus of the specification.

Agencies of socialisation

- Examine the role of families in transmitting norms, values, language and expectations, reinforcing links to primary socialisation.
- Explore schools as agencies of socialisation through rules, sanctions, authority and the hidden curriculum.
- Teachers may draw on prior learning from the education topic, particularly teacher expectations and the hidden curriculum, to show how schools reinforce norms, values and acceptance of authority through everyday routines and sanctions.
- Discuss peer groups and their influence on behaviour, identity and conformity, particularly during adolescence, linking to social action ideas about interaction and group norms.
- Analyse the role of the media in shaping norms, values and identities through representation and role modelling, including feminist analysis of gender stereotypes.
- Consider religion as an agency of socialisation through moral codes and behavioural expectations, reinforcing shared values and social cohesion.
- Explore the workplace as an agency of socialisation through hierarchy, discipline, punctuality and professional identity.
- An effective embedded task is a “day in the life” activity where students map which agencies influence them at different points in a typical day and identify the methods used by each.

Processes and methods of socialisation

- Explain how socialisation occurs through rewards, sanctions, routines, role modelling and language.
- Encourage students to recognise similarities across agencies, such as the use of rules and sanctions in both schools and workplaces.
- Functionalist ideas can be applied by emphasising how these processes encourage conformity and social order.
- Social action approaches can be used to show how individuals may interpret or resist these methods differently.
- A short consolidation activity could involve matching methods of socialisation to agencies, with discussion of which perspective best explains each example.
- Throughout the topic, integrate brief exam-style practice such as defining key terms, identifying agencies of socialisation or explaining one way socialisation influences behaviour.

Resources

- Case studies drawn from different societies to support international comparison
- Media examples to illustrate stereotyping, role modelling and identity formation
- Glossary support for key terms including norms, values, roles and identity
- For examination purposes, students should be confident in defining key concepts, applying agencies and processes of socialisation to examples and using sociological perspectives where relevant to explain how socialisation shapes behaviour and identity.

Weeks Twenty-Two to Twenty-Four – Social identities and social control

Specification content

3.2.2.3 Social identities and social change

- Formal and informal social control
- Sanctions, both positive and negative
- Consensus and conflict views of social control
- Stigmatised identities and processes of othering
- Agencies of informal social control: families, schools, peers, media, religion and the workplace
- Agencies of formal social control: government and laws, police and other enforcement agencies, criminal justice systems
- Aims and types of punishment
- Crime prevention, including types of policing and surveillance
- Sociological perspectives on social control: functionalist, Marxist, feminist and social action/interactionist

Learning outcomes

Students should:

- understand how social control operates through both formal and informal means
- explain how sanctions encourage conformity and discourage deviance
- analyse how different sociological perspectives explain social control
- explore how identities may be stigmatised and how this shapes behaviour and life chances
- apply ideas about social control to examples from their own society or other societies
- develop confidence in using sociological concepts to explain crime, deviance and conformity.

Suggested timing

6-8 hours

Possible teaching and learning activities

Introducing social control and conformity

- Begin by revisiting the idea that societies depend on shared norms and values to function, linking directly back to prior learning on socialisation. This helps students see social control as a continuation of social learning rather than a separate topic.
- Use familiar, everyday examples to establish that social control often operates subtly and routinely, not just through the law. For example, approval from parents, peer pressure or expectations within school settings can all be used to highlight how behaviour is shaped without formal punishment.
- As a short starter or low-stakes task, students could be asked to list examples of behaviour that are encouraged and discouraged in their own society, before identifying how this control is exercised and by whom.

Formal and informal social control

- Explicitly distinguish between formal and informal social control, using clear contrasts. For instance, compare school sanctions, police action or legal punishment with parental disapproval, gossip or praise.

- Students can sort a range of short scenarios into 'formal' and 'informal' categories, justifying their decisions. This works particularly well as a paired activity and encourages discussion around grey areas where control overlaps.
- Build in short recap moments where students explain the difference in their own words, supporting clarity for shorter exam questions.

Sanctions and social order

- Introduce positive and negative sanctions by focusing on outcomes rather than intentions. Emphasise that sanctions can reward conformity as well as punish deviance.
- A useful activity here is to provide examples of behaviour and ask students to identify the sanction used and whether it is positive or negative. These examples can be drawn from schools, families, workplaces or the media.
- Where appropriate, encourage students to consider whether sanctions are always effective, allowing for brief evaluative discussion without moving fully into extended theory.

Consensus and conflict views of social control

- Teach consensus perspectives, particularly functionalist ideas, by focusing on the role of social control in maintaining stability, shared values and social cohesion. Punishment can be presented as reinforcing boundaries rather than simply causing harm.
- This can be followed by a short explanation task where students explain how punishment might benefit society as a whole, using one clear example.
- Introduce conflict perspectives, including Marxist ideas, by shifting the focus to power, inequality and whose interests are served by laws and punishment. Encourage students to consider whether all groups are treated equally within systems of control.
- A comparison task works well here, where students identify one way consensus views and conflict views explain social control differently, helping to build evaluative confidence.

Stigma, othering and social identities

- Explore stigmatised identities and othering by focusing on how labels are attached to certain groups and the impact this can have on opportunities, treatment and self-identity.
- This can be approached sensitively through anonymised examples or historical cases, keeping the emphasis on sociological processes rather than individual behaviour.
- Students could be asked to explain how being labelled as 'deviant' might affect someone's behaviour or life chances, reinforcing links to identity and social control.

Agencies of social control

- Cover informal agencies such as families, schools and peers in slightly more depth, as students are likely to be most familiar with these. Discussion can focus on expectations, rewards and sanctions used to regulate behaviour.
- Other agencies such as religion, the media and the workplace can be introduced through shorter examples, ensuring breadth without repetition.
- For formal agencies, guide students through how laws are created, enforced and punished, presenting social control as a process rather than isolated institutions.
- A sequencing activity, where students place stages of formal social control in order, helps consolidate understanding.

Punishment, prevention and surveillance

- Introduce the aims of punishment, including deterrence, rehabilitation and retribution, linking each aim to clear examples from different societies.
- Students could match types of punishment to aims, encouraging application while keeping cognitive demand manageable.
- When teaching crime prevention and surveillance, explore both visible and less visible forms of control, such as policing styles, CCTV or digital monitoring.
- Brief discussion around effectiveness and potential concerns allows students to engage critically without requiring detailed prior knowledge.

Resources

- Throughout the topic, regularly pause to model how ideas could be applied to a named society or one that students are familiar with, supporting extended response questions.
- Build in short definition and explanation tasks for key concepts such as deviance, sanction and social control, closely reflecting examination command words.
- Encourage students to practise balanced responses by contrasting perspectives, particularly when preparing for 6- and 8-mark questions.

Weeks Twenty-Five to Twenty-Eight – Social control

Specification content

3.2.2.4 Social control

- The 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
 - cybercrimes
 - white collar crimes
 - corporate crimes
 - state crimes
 - green or environmental crimes
 - 'victimless' crimes
- Issues in measuring and researching crime and deviance, including:
 - official or police statistics
 - self-report studies
 - victim surveys
- Patterns of offending and victimisation by:
 - gender
 - social class
 - age
 - ethnicity
- Explanations of patterns of offending and victimisation

Learning outcomes

Students should:

- explain what is meant by crime and deviance and recognise that these are socially constructed categories
- describe how definitions of crime and deviance vary between societies and change over time
- identify and illustrate different types of crime using clear and appropriate examples
- understand how crime is measured and evaluate the strengths and limitations of different data sources
- describe patterns of offending and victimisation linked to gender, social class, age and ethnicity
- apply sociological explanations to patterns of crime and victimisation
- develop confidence in responding to exam-style questions that require explanation, application and evaluation

Suggested timing

8-10 hours

Possible teaching and learning activities

Introducing crime, deviance and social control

- Begin by establishing clear definitions of *crime* and *deviance*, emphasising that crime refers to behaviour that breaks formal laws, while deviance refers to behaviour that breaks social norms. Prior learning on norms and values can be revisited to reinforce continuity across the course.
- Students can be presented with a range of behaviours and asked to decide whether each example represents crime, deviance, both, or neither. This helps clarify the distinction while also revealing areas of ambiguity. Discussion can focus on why different judgements are made and what this suggests about social rules and expectations.
- Support students in recognising that crime and deviance are socially constructed rather than fixed categories. This can be developed through cross-cultural, historical and situational examples that show how the same behaviour may be treated differently depending on context.
- Encourage students to distinguish between informal social reactions, such as disapproval or stigma, and formal legal responses. This prepares students for later learning on punishment, enforcement and agencies of social control.

Types of crime and patterns of offending

- Teach types of crime using clear definitions supported by accessible examples. Each crime type can be explored through:
 - a short definition
 - one everyday or familiar example
 - one wider societal or organisational example
- This approach supports understanding of less familiar categories such as white collar, corporate and green crime.
- When covering cybercrime and environmental crime, focus on the nature of harm, responsibility and impact rather than technical detail. This keeps explanations sociological and accessible.
- Introduce patterns of offending and victimisation by gender, social class, age and ethnicity gradually, returning to these patterns across lessons rather than treating them as a single topic.
- Explicitly separate *offending* from *victimisation*, as students often conflate the two. Comparison tasks or summary grids can support clarity and precision in written responses.

Measuring crime and deviance

- Introduce official statistics, self-report studies and victim surveys together so that students can directly compare how crime is measured.
- For each method, focus on:
 - what is included and excluded
 - who controls definitions and recording
 - how reliable and valid the data is likely to be
- Students can practise applying this knowledge by examining short extracts or summaries and identifying strengths and limitations, mirroring the demands of structured exam questions.
- Reinforce the concept of the 'dark figure of crime' as a linking idea across all methods, helping students understand why crime statistics are not always accurate.

Explaining patterns and sociological perspectives

- Develop explanations of crime patterns using sociological concepts rather than descriptive or stereotypical explanations. Explanations may include socialisation, inequality, labelling, peer influence and power.

- Encourage students to generate more than one explanation for the same pattern, reinforcing the idea that sociological explanations are often competing or complementary.
- Introduce sociological perspectives as ways of interpreting crime and social control rather than as isolated theory, supporting more evaluative responses.
- Model cautious, analytical language to help students avoid overgeneralisation and develop balanced exam answers.

Resources

- Provide regular opportunities for students to practise definitions, brief explanations and short evaluative points, reflecting the balance of questions in Paper 2.
- Gradually reduce scaffolding for extended responses, supporting students in developing independent exam technique.
- Encourage the use of examples drawn from a society students know, reinforcing the international nature of the specification while maintaining sociological accuracy.
- Provide examples of quantitative and qualitative data for practising interpretation and encourage discussion of strengths and weaknesses of the data (applying knowledge and understanding of research methods learned in year 1).

Weeks Twenty-Nine to Thirty-Four – Revision and exam preparations

Suggested timing

8-10 hours

Possible teaching and learning activities

- Practice and record key definitions
- Revision activities
- Examination questions and scaffolded examination responses