Qualification awaiting accreditation

CAMBRIDGE OCR



⚠ **This specification is for first teaching from September 2027. First assessment will be from summer 2028.**

Specification

AS Level

Sociology

Cambridge OCR Level 3 Advanced Subsidiary GCE in Sociology | HI83
For first teaching in 2027
For first assessment in 2028

Version 1.0 | November 2026
ocr.org.uk/sociology

Are you using the latest version of this specification?

The latest version of our specifications will always be on our website and may differ from printed versions. We will inform centres about changes to specifications.

This qualification is in draft form and has not yet been accredited by Ofqual, the regulator. It is published to enable teachers to have an early sight of our proposed approach to this qualification. Further changes may be required, and no assurance can be given at this time that the proposed qualification will be made in its current form, or that it will be accredited in time for first teaching in 2027.

Tell us what you think

Your feedback plays an important role in how we develop, market, support and resource qualifications now and into the future. We want you and your students to enjoy and get the best out of our qualifications and resources, but to do that we need your honest opinions to tell us whether we're on the right track or not.

You can email your thoughts to support@ocr.org.uk or visit our feedback page to learn more about how you can help us improve our qualifications.



Designing and testing in collaboration with teachers and students



Helping young people develop an ethical view of the world



Equality, diversity, inclusion and belonging (EDIB) are part of everything we do

 © Cambridge OCR 2026

Summary of updates

Date	Version	Section	Title of section	Change
November 2026	1.0	All	-	Creation of specification.

Draft

Contents

Summary of updates **3**
Contents **4**
1. Why choose Cambridge OCR? **5**
1.1 Teacher support 6
1.2 People and Planet 7
2. Specification at a glance **8**
2.1 Assessment overview 8
2.2 Content overview 9
3. Subject content **10**
3.1 Component 01: Socialisation, culture and identity 13
3.2 Component 02: Researching and understanding social inequalities 21
3.3 Skills 25
3.4 Aims and Learning outcomes 26
4. Assessment **27**
4.1 Forms of assessment 27
4.2 Assessment of extended response 28
4.3 Assessment objectives (AOs) 28
4.4 Command words 29
4.5 Synoptic assessment 32
4.6 Calculating qualification results 32
5. Admin **33**
5.1 Before you start 33
5.2 Making entries 35
5.3 After the exams 36

Draft

1. Why choose Cambridge OCR?

Choose Cambridge OCR and you've got the reassurance that you're working with one of the UK's leading exam boards.

We work with teachers, employers, and universities to create qualifications that support the needs of all students and help them prepare for their future. We offer A Levels, GCSEs, vocational qualifications, and other academic options to schools, colleges, workplaces, and other organisations.

We are part of Cambridge University Press & Assessment, Europe's largest assessment agency and a department of the University of Cambridge. We play a leading role in developing and delivering assessments worldwide, operating in over 150 countries.

We listen. The decisions we make when we develop our specification are based on teacher and student feedback. To tell us more about your experiences of teaching our qualifications, join our teacher panel and help shape the future of our assessments.



Our A Level qualifications are accredited by Ofqual, the regulator for qualifications offered in England. The accreditation number for this qualification is QN xxx/xxxx/x.

 © Cambridge OCR 2026

1.1 Teacher support

We have a range of support services to help you at every stage, from preparation to delivery.

Our teacher support is designed to make teaching our qualifications straightforward, whether you are an experienced teacher, new to teaching, new to Cambridge OCR, or not a subject specialist of the qualification you are teaching.

- **Teach Cambridge**: our teacher website, providing access to everything you need in one place.
- **Teacher resources**: extensive resources to download or watch. Plan and structure your teaching with curriculum planners, schemes of work and teacher guides, and prepare for assessment with examiner reports, exemplars and NEA guidance.
- **Professional development**: a comprehensive programme of assessor-led courses and Q&A sessions with our experts, plus free teacher network events.
- **Online training courses**: on-demand NEA support and marking practice to complete at your own pace.
- **ExamBuilder**: our free test-maker platform. Access past papers and build your own customised formative assessments for your students.
- **Access to Scripts**: a free service for exams officers to download copies of your students' completed question papers.
- **Active Results**: our free online results analysis service to help you review exam performance.

Request trial access to Teach Cambridge to explore the range or ask your exams officer to set up your account.

Our Cambridge OCR subject advisors provide support and information to centres, including:

- Specification and non-exam assessment advice.
- Updates on resource developments and training opportunities.
- Information on our subject networks giving an opportunity to share ideas and expertise.

Further help and support

Visit our subject pages to find out more about the assessment and resources to support your teaching and request trial access to Teach Cambridge.

Not a registered or approved Cambridge OCR centre? Discover the benefits of becoming one on the Cambridge OCR website.

Have more questions about teaching Cambridge OCR qualifications? Explore our Online Support Centre or contact our Customer Support team. Contact details are available on the final page of this specification.

Work with us

As one of the major UK exam boards, Cambridge OCR is responsible for creating and marking exams taken by over a million students each year. We work with over 10,000 professionals to create, check, mark and moderate our assessments.

If you would like to find out more about becoming a Cambridge OCR examiner, please visit our website for more information.

Draft

1.2 People and Planet

We have clear commitments to champion sustainability, diversity, trust and respect for our people and planet.

Helping young people develop an ethical view of the world.

We are committed to supporting a curriculum that helps young people develop an ethical view of the world. This enables them to take social responsibility, understand environmental issues and prepare them for the green jobs of the future.

Equality, diversity, inclusion and belonging (EDIB) are part of everything we do.

Our EDIB principles are that we:

- are respectful and considerate
- celebrate differences and promote positive attitudes to belonging
- include perspectives that reflect the diverse cultural and lifestyle backgrounds of our society
- challenge prejudicial views and unconscious biases
- promote a safe and supportive approach to learning
- are accessible and fair, creating positive experiences for all
- provide opportunities for everyone to perform at their best
- are contemporary, relevant and equip everyone to live and thrive in a global, diverse world
- create a shared sense of identity in a modern mixed society with one humanity.

To learn more, including our work on accessibility in our assessment materials, visit our People and Planet page.

Draft

2. Specification at a glance

2.1 Assessment overview

Students must complete both question papers (01 and 02) to be awarded the Cambridge OCR Level 3 Advanced Subsidiary GCE in Sociology.

Content	Assessment
Compulsory section on introducing socialisation, culture and identity. Students will also study **one** of the following options: • families and relationships • youth subcultures • media.	Socialisation, culture and identity (01) 50 marks 1 hour 30 Written paper **50% of total AS Level**
Introduces research methods and researching and understanding social inequalities.	Researching and understanding social inequalities (02)# 50 marks 1 hour 30 Written paper **50% of total AS Level**

# indicates inclusion of synoptic assessment

Draft

2.2 Content overview

Sociology focuses on the study of social life and how our environment shapes our futures. Looking at how society is organised and how humans experience their lives, helps students to be able to question why our world is as it is. There are two components, broken down into three themes.

Theme 1: Socialisation, culture and identity

Introduces students to the key themes of socialisation, culture and identity.

- What is culture?
- What is socialisation?
- What is identity?

Theme 2: Families and relationships, Youth subcultures, or Media

Students will study **one** of the following options:

- Families and relationships
  - How are family life and relationships changing?
  - To what extent are roles and relationships within families and households changing?
- Youth subcultures
  - How are youth subcultures formed? Why do they develop?
  - Why do some young people participate in deviant subcultures?
- Media
  - How are different social groups represented in the media?
  - What effect do the media have on audiences?

Theme 3: Researching and understanding social inequalities

Students will need to be familiar with research methods and researching/understanding social inequalities. This will include the relationship between theories and methods, the main stages of the research process, methods used in sociological research, and patterns and trends in social inequality and difference.

Draft

3. Subject content

The knowledge, understanding and skills required in section 3.1.1 onwards are set out in three columns:

- The first column states the key question students should be considering.
- The second column is called 'Points to include (Breadth)'. This column clarifies the minimum breadth of content required. Students should know and understand each point including its meaning, features, characteristics and any relevant example to support understanding, etc.
- The third column is called 'Guidance (Depth)'. This column clarifies the depth of understanding and skills required. This column will often focus on the nature of sociological thought that should be applied to the 'points to include' column as well as, where appropriate, the strengths and weaknesses of theoretical and/or methodological approaches and perspectives.

The skills students need to develop throughout the course of study are listed in section 3.3. These key skills will support students in the assessment of this qualification.

Students should know the nature of sociological thought and how it links to various theoretical debates or ideas. The following provides a non-exhaustive guide as to what each concept and theoretical issue means and links to how this could be used in this qualification. The content listed in section 3.1 onwards will use these terms. Students will be required to understand what these mean in the given context.

Concepts and theoretical issues key information table:

Concept and theoretical issue	What it means	How it links to theories
Social order and social control	**Social order** = the way in which various components of society work together to maintain the 'status quo'. **Social control** = how society regulates behaviour, both formally and informally (e.g., through laws, norms and values, social institutions, sanctions).	**Functionalism**: shared norms/values are both necessary and desirable to create order. This social control maintains social cohesion. **Marxism**: the social order helps to maintain ruling class power, and this control maintains capitalism. **Weberian**: control is achieved through authority, bureaucratic organisation and social closure. For social control to be effective, society needs to believe rules are fair. **Feminism**: control maintains patriarchy and the social order keeps women in subordinate positions. **New Right**: strong governmental policy is needed to prevent societal and moral breakdown. **Pluralism**: control comes from shared values and agreement between diverse groups rather than through a single 'top-down' authority. **Postmodernism**: society is no longer so hierarchical and rigid so dismisses grand, structural theories, and instead highlights a more fragmented, self-regulating and media saturated system.

Draft

Social change	How society functions and structures change over time.	**Functionalism**: change is a slow, evolutionary and adaptive process to maintain stability when institutions become dysfunctional. **Marxism**: change is driven by the inevitable conflict between social classes (the class struggle) and may result in rapid, revolutionary change. **Weberian**: change can be driven by ideas, beliefs, and rationalisation (culture) not just economic forces. **Feminism**: change comes from challenging patriarchal structures, gender norms and inequalities. **Social democratic**: change through gradual reform, democratic processes and state/policy interventions. **New Right**: wary of rapid change; prefer tradition and can be described as reactionary in their desire to reverse contemporary social shifts. **Postmodernism**: change is fast, fragmented, unpredictable and diverse. Alongside greater individual freedoms are increased risks and uncertainty.
Conflict and consensus	**Conflict** = society is made up of groups with conflicting interests resulting in tensions and inequalities between these groups. **Consensus** = shared agreement on values resulting in a harmonious society.	**Functionalism**: consensus is key to social order, which is maintained through agreement, not force. **Marxism**: conflict between different opposing social classes, is central to society. Consensus is an illusion imposed by the ruling class. **Weberian**: society is based on multi-dimensional conflicts (class, status, party) but maintains consensus through hierarchy, authority and bureaucracy. **Feminism**: conflict between genders is due to patriarchal structures and controls. **Pluralism**: power is shared and conflict exists but is managed through negotiation. **New Right**: need shared traditional values to maintain consensus and order. They actively oppose alternative lifestyles. **Postmodernism**: rejects the ideas of both conflict and consensus approaches as they fail to understand the complexities, uncertainties and fragmentation of contemporary society.
Social structure and social action	**Social Structure** = the social patterns through which society is organised. It sees large-scale forces as shaping the individual and are often described as 'macro' theories. **Social Action** = individuals have free	**Functionalism/Marxism**: structure shapes an individual's behaviour and thoughts. **Weberian**: both structure and action matter. Large-scale structures are created, maintained and changed by individual actions. **Interactionism**: focus on social action and meaning. Structure is not fixed, it can be changed. **Feminism**: structure (patriarchy) causes gender inequalities and disadvantages women, but collective action can change these institutions. **Pluralism**: individuals and groups both influence

Draft

	will and so make their own choices. They are not passively shaped by society. Often described as a 'micro' theory.	society, no single interest dominates. **Postmodernism**: less focused on fixed structures which they see as breaking down; more about choice and 'pick and mix' identities.
The role of values	Shared beliefs about what is good and important in society; they guide behaviour and decisions.	**Functionalism**: shared values create social cohesion. **Marxism**: dominant values reflect ruling class interests and ideologies. **Weberian**: values can shape social action and social change. **Feminism**: values often reflect male dominance (patriarchal values). **New Right**: strong traditional values are essential. **Social democratic**: values like equality and fairness should shape social policy. **Postmodernism**: in contemporary societies, values are diverse, meaning there is no single dominant value system.
Relationship between sociology and contemporary social policy	Sociology studies society and can influence social policies; social policies also shape society. **Social policy** = government strategies, laws, and actions designed to improve welfare, tackle social issues and manage social services.	**Functionalism**: policies promote stability and social cohesion and meet social needs. **Marxism**: policies maintain social class inequalities and so benefit the powerful. **Weberian**: policies shaped by bureaucracy and competing interests, often leading to social closure. **Feminism**: policies can reduce or reinforce gender inequalities. **Pluralism**: policies result from negotiation between groups. Diverse providers, not just the state. **New Right**: policies should reduce state intervention and promote self-reliance. A political perspective that believes state intervention causes welfare dependency. **Social democratic**: policies should reduce inequality and support welfare through reform. **Postmodernism**: sceptical of universal policies due to societal diversity. Favours more individualised and localised policies.

Draft

3.1 Component 01: Socialisation, culture and identity

This component introduces students to the core themes of socialisation, culture and identity. It develops these themes through the context of **one** of three options: families and relationships, youth subcultures, or media. These options develop skills that enable individuals to focus on their personal identity, roles and responsibilities within society and develop a lifelong interest in social issues. The concepts and theoretical issues key information table should be used in conjunction with the specified content that follows.

3.1.1 Theme 1: Introducing socialisation, culture and identity

Key question	Points to include (Breadth)	Guidance (Depth)
1. What is culture?	☐ Definitions of culture, norms and values and their relative nature. ☐ Types of culture: ○ subculture ○ high culture ○ popular culture ○ global culture (including reverse colonialism, global village) ○ consumer culture (including conspicuous consumption) ○ cultural diversity (including intercultural and intracultural diversity) ○ cultural hybridity (including code switching).	☐ How these change according to time, culture and society. ☐ Include the associated norms and values for each type of culture.
2. What is socialisation?	☐ Definitions of primary and secondary socialisation. ☐ Agencies of socialisation: ○ family (including manipulation, canalisation, imitation) ○ peer group (including peer pressure, negative and positive sanctions) ○ media (including male gaze, role modelling) ○ religion (including cultural transmission, religious rituals) ○ education (including formal curriculum, hidden curriculum) ○ workplace (including canteen culture, re-socialisation). ☐ Formal agencies of social control and the processes used to maintain social order:	☐ How definitions link to agencies of socialisation. ☐ Conflict, consensus and social action theory in understanding the processes that agencies of socialisation use to socialise individuals into society's norms and values and maintaining social order. ☐ Understand the overlap between formal and informal social control in work, education and religion.

Draft

Key question	Points to include (Breadth)	Guidance (Depth)
	○ criminal justice system (including police, courts and prisons) ○ government. ☐ Informal agencies of social control and the processes used to maintain social order: ○ family ○ peer groups/subcultures ○ media ○ religion ○ education ○ workplace.	
3. What is identity?	☐ Aspects of identity and the associated cultural characteristics and values: ○ ethnicity (including generational differences, shared cultures) ○ nationality (including banal nationalism, white nationalism) ○ gender (including non-binary, trans identity, femininity, masculinity) ○ social class (including cultural, economic and social capital) ○ sexuality (including homosexual role, sexual fluidity) ○ age (including elderly, middle age, youth, childhood, toxic childhood) ○ disability (including the medical and social model). ☐ Hybrid identities and how identity can be fluid (including cultural code switching, Brasians, white mask, neighbourhood nationalism).	☐ Understand how identities are created including the influence of agencies of socialisation. ☐ How identity can be subject to social change.

Draft

3.1.2 Theme 2: Option topics

3.1.2.1 Option 1: Families and relationships

This option focuses on the family as a central agency of socialisation and a main transmitter of culture in contemporary society. The core themes of **socialisation, culture, identity, social differentiation, power and stratification** are threaded through this section, and content should be studied in relation to these themes. It allows students to explore contemporary family structures and relationships. The concepts and theoretical issues key information table should be used in conjunction with the specified content that follows.

Key question	Points to include (Breadth)	Guidance (Depth)
1. How are family life and relationships changing?	☐ The diversity of family and household types in contemporary UK society, including blood and marriage-based relationships as well as chosen relationships: ○ nuclear families ○ extended families ○ lone parent families ○ reconstituted families ○ same-sex families ○ non-family households ○ lone-person households.	
	☐ Changing sociological understanding of family life, values and diversity in UK society, including: ○ emerging family and non-family types ○ trends in marriage, divorce and cohabitation ○ same-sex relationships.	☐ Have an overview of trends over the last 30 years and consider the key reasons for these changes. Detailed knowledge of statistics on marriage, divorce and demographic changes is not required.
	☐ Understanding of key demographic changes and the reasons for these: ○ birth rate ○ family size ○ age at marriage ○ age of childbearing ○ ageing population.	
	☐ The role of the family and the desirability of the nuclear family in contemporary UK society: ○ functionalism (including universal family, the warm bath theory and the functions of the family) ○ New Right (including traditional marriage and gender roles).	☐ Theoretical views including conflict, consensus, social structure, social order and social control in relation to the role of the family in contemporary society. A theoretical approach to considering the extent of family diversity should be taken.

Draft

Key question	Points to include (Breadth)	Guidance (Depth)
	○ Marxism (including capitalism, reproduction of the labour force) ○ feminism (Marxist, liberal and radical feminism, post-feminism) ○ postmodernism (including individualisation, confluent love and choice).	
2. To what extent are roles and relationships within families and households changing?	☐ Roles and relationships in the family and how they are changing: ○ domestic division of labour (including housework/paid domestic work) ○ paid work and working practices (including division of labour, symmetrical family, joint conjugal roles) ○ emotional work (including triple shift) ○ childcare/caring for elderly relatives (including paranoid parenting, sandwich generation) ○ the 'dark side' of the family (including domestic abuse, neglect) ○ finances/decision making ○ power and control (including lagged adaptation, toxic childhood, coercive control) ○ the role of children, friends and extended family ○ the growth of child-centred families ○ the extension of childhood.	☐ Social structure, conflict and consensus in relation to roles and relationships in the family. A theoretical approach should be taken, applying functionalist, Marxist and feminist approaches.

Draft

3.1.2.2 Option 2: Youth subcultures

This option focuses on youth as an important period in the socialisation process when individuals are developing a sense of identity within their peer groups. The core themes of **socialisation, culture, identity, social differentiation, power and stratification** are threaded through this section, and content should be studied in relation to these themes. It allows students to explore different types of youth subcultures and the roles they may play in society. The concepts and theoretical issues key information table should be used in conjunction with the specified content that follows.

Key question	Points to include (Breadth)	Guidance (Depth)
1. How are youth cultures and subcultures formed? Why do they develop?	☐ Youth culture and subcultures and how and why they are formed: ○ functionalism (including transitional stage, social integration) ○ Marxism/neo-Marxism (including spectacular subcultures, resistance, magical solutions) ○ feminism (including bedroom culture, malestream sociology) ○ postmodernism (including neo-tribes, supermarket of style). ☐ Subcultures and their norms and values relating to: ○ social class (including resistance, bricolage) ○ gender (male and female subcultures) ○ ethnicity (including white mask, white wannabes) ○ hybridity (including Blasian, cultural appropriation).	☐ Theoretical views, including conflict and consensus, social structure, social order and social control in relation to the role and formation of youth culture and subculture and their associated norms and values.
2. Why do some young people participate in deviant subcultures?	☐ Deviant youth subcultures: ○ Online subcultures (including hackers, incels, radicalisation). ○ criminal subcultures (including gangs) ○ anti-school subcultures (including opposition to pro-school norms and values, peer status) ○ urban music subcultures (including drill, grime, rave) ○ female subcultures (including New Wave Girls, Skater girls). ☐ Patterns and trends in sociological research and official statistics on youth subcultural deviance in terms of: ○ social class	☐ The role of norms and values in these deviant subcultures and the threat to social order. ☐ Patterns and trends (within the last 30 years) of youth deviance based on the evidence presented by official statistics.

Draft

Key question	Points to include (Breadth)	Guidance (Depth)
	○ gender ○ ethnicity ○ location. ☐ Explanations for why some young people participate in deviant subcultures: ○ functionalism (including strain theory) ○ subcultural theories (including status frustration, illegitimate opportunity structures) ○ Marxism/neo-Marxism (including relative deprivation, marginalisation, resistance) ○ interactionism (including labelling, master status) ○ feminism (including heteronormative role, stigmatisation). ☐ The role of the media in the formation of deviant youth subcultures, moral panics and folk devils: ○ deviancy amplification ○ social/digital media influence.	☐ Theoretical views including conflict and consensus and social structure, social action, social control in relation to why some young people participate in deviant subcultures. ☐ Identity-based explanations which could include issues of ethnic identity, gender and social class.

Draft

3.1.2.3 Option 3: Media

This option focuses on how media plays an increasingly important role as an agent of socialisation in contemporary society. The core themes of **socialisation, culture, identity, social differentiation, power and stratification** are threaded through this section, and content should be studied in relation to these themes. It allows students to explore a range of evidence relating to media representations and media effects. The concepts and theoretical issues key information table should be used in conjunction with the specified content that follows.

Key question	Points to include (Breadth)	Guidance (Depth)
1. How are different social groups represented in the media?	☐ Evidence and explanations for the representation and effects of misrepresentations of the following social groups in the media and how far these are changing in relation to: o ethnicity (including stereotypes, tokenism) o gender (including non-binary, trans identity, masculinity and femininity) o sexuality (including heteronormative lens, queer culture) o social class (including upper, middle, working and underclass) o age (including elderly, youth, childhood). ☐ How and why views on media representation are formed and change: o Marxism/neo-Marxism (including ruling-class hegemonic view, power inequalities) o pluralism (including supply and demand, diversity and choice, Fourth Estate) o feminism (including male gaze, beauty myth) o postmodernism (including saturation, globalisation, hyper-reality).	☐ Representation and misrepresentation across a range of ethnicities, genders, sexualities, classes and ages. ☐ Understand how social groups intersect in representation within the media. ☐ Understand explanations for these representations, and any changing representations, utilising theoretical perspectives as appropriate. ☐ Theoretical views including conflict, social order, social control and social structure in relation to media representations.
2. What effect do the media have on audiences?	☐ Theoretical views of media effects: o direct media models (including hypodermic syringe) o indirect media models (including cultural effects model and two-step flow model)	☐ How the media acts as an agency of social control and how it affects social order. ☐ Theoretical views, including social action theory, on the effects of the media on the audience.

Draft

Key question	Points to include (Breadth)	Guidance (Depth)
	○ active audience models (including uses and gratifications and reception theory). ☐ The role and impact of the media (including deviancy amplification, labelling and the creation of moral panics and folk devils). ☐ Patterns and trends in sociological research and official statistics on media consumption and their influence on identities and values in terms of: ○ social class ○ gender ○ ethnicity ○ age.	☐ Patterns and trends (within the last 30 years) of media consumption.

Draft

3.2 Component 02: Researching and understanding social inequalities

This component explores the methods of sociological enquiry and uses the context of social difference and inequality to develop knowledge and understanding of contemporary social processes. The core themes of **social differentiation, power and stratification** are threaded through this section, and content should be studied in relation to these themes. This component aims to foster the development of critical and reflective thinking with a respect for social diversity in terms of social class, gender, and ethnicity. Although not directly assessed, this component encourages students to carry out their own small-scale research projects as a way of enhancing their sociological understanding of methodology linking to the key content and students are encouraged to practice research to aid with understanding this topic.

Where possible and appropriate, synoptic links should be made with the content of the other components throughout teaching and assessment (e.g., in the application of evaluative issues). See section 4.5 for more information on synoptic assessment.

3.2.1 Theme 3 Section A: Research methods and researching social inequalities

In this section, students are introduced to a range of research methods and sources of data as well as the factors influencing the design of sociological research and the relationship between theory and methods. Students are encouraged to consider the ethical, practical and theoretical issues arising in sociological research and to apply knowledge of research methods to the particular contexts of Section B. The concepts and theoretical issues key information table should be used in conjunction with the specified content that follows.

Key question	Points to include (Breadth)	Guidance (Depth)
1. What is the relationship between theory and methods?	☐ Positivism: ○ patterns ○ trends ○ objectivity ○ value freedom ○ generalisations ○ quantitative data. ☐ Interpretivism: ○ meanings and experiences ○ Verstehen and empathy ○ rapport ○ subjectivity ○ researcher imposition and bias ○ reflexivity ○ value laden ○ qualitative data. ☐ Key research concepts: ○ validity ○ reliability ○ representativeness ○ generalisability.	☐ Understand how social research is guided by theory – social structure and social action approaches. ☐ Use these concepts in an evaluative way when considering the research process and methodological perspectives.

 © Cambridge OCR 2026

Key question	Points to include (Breadth)	Guidance (Depth)
2. What are the main stages of the research process?	☐ The research process: ○ factors influencing the choice of research topic including funding, the researcher and the funding body ○ factors influencing the choice of research methods ○ aims/hypothesis/research questions ○ primary/secondary data ○ operationalisation ○ pilot studies ○ data collection ○ interpretation of data.	
	☐ Sampling process.	☐ Understand the practical, ethical and theoretical factors influencing the research process and the choice of sampling process.
	☐ Sampling techniques and the advantages and disadvantages of each technique: ○ Random: ▪ random ▪ systematic ▪ stratified. ○ Non-random: ▪ snowball ▪ volunteer ▪ opportunity ▪ quota.	☐ Understand the advantages and disadvantages of random and non-random sampling techniques.
	☐ Access and gatekeeping.	☐ Understand how samples are accessed and the issues with access.
	☐ Consideration of ethics in the research process.	☐ Understand ethical considerations such as those used by the British Sociological Association and why ethical principles should be followed.
	☐ The relationship between sociology and contemporary social policy.	☐ How sociological research contributes to contemporary social policy.
3. Which research methods are used in	☐ Research methods: ○ questionnaires ○ structured interviews	☐ The uses of research methods in the context of social inequalities and the advantages and disadvantages of each.

Draft

Key question	Points to include (Breadth)	Guidance (Depth)
sociological research?	○ statistical data (official and non-official) ○ content analysis ○ observations (participant/non-participant/covert/overt) ○ unstructured interviews ○ semi structured interviews. ☐ Quantitative and qualitative data. ☐ Ethnographic methods approach. ☐ Longitudinal studies. ☐ Mixed methods: ○ triangulation ○ methodological pluralism.	

Draft

3.2.2 Theme 3 Section B: Understanding social inequalities

Within this section students will have the opportunity to develop knowledge and understanding of contemporary patterns and trends of social inequality. The core themes of **socialisation, culture, identity, social differentiation, power and stratification** are threaded through this section, and content should be studied in relation to these themes. Students should be able to engage in theoretical debate, explore conceptual issues and develop skills of analysis and evaluation of sociological research and evidence. Students are encouraged to think synoptically in this unit and should be able to apply concepts learned in other topics areas, including research methods (in 3.2.1), to the appropriate question in the assessment of this component. The concepts and theoretical issues key information table should be used in conjunction with the specified content that follows.

The first question from section B in the assessment will require students to apply relevant topics from section A in order to answer the question.

Key question	Points to include (Breadth)	Guidance (Depth)
1. What are the main patterns and trends in social inequality and difference?	☐ Evidence of social inequality and difference in a range of areas of social life and how these may impact the life chances of individuals in relation to: ○ social class (including, social mobility, social closure) ○ gender (including vertical and horizontal segregation, gender pay gap, glass ceiling) ○ ethnicity (including concrete ceiling, institutional racism, under-representation).	☐ The main patterns and trends and how they are established and how they have changed in relation to class, gender and ethnicity. ☐ Evidence of social inequalities across a range of areas of social life, such as work and employment, health, and poverty, and how these are shaped by systems of social stratification. ☐ How inequalities have impacted the life chances of individuals. Evidence of inequality taught in other areas of the course can also be included.
2. How can patterns and trends in social inequality and difference be explained?	☐ The main sociological and theoretical explanations of social inequality and difference: ○ functionalism (including meritocracy, value consensus, social solidarity) ○ Marxism (including class conflict, alienation, ideology) ○ feminism (including dual burden, gender roles, patriarchy) ○ Weberian (including status, party, social class).	☐ Theoretical views including social structure and social action debates for why contemporary social inequality and difference exist. ☐ Theoretical views including social order, social control, conflict and consensus in relation to patterns and trends in social inequality. ☐ How contemporary social policies relate to social class, gender and ethnicity and how they have tried to reduce social inequalities.

DRAFT

3.3 Skills

The skills listed below should be developed throughout the course of study where it is relevant to do so.

Collection and recording of evidence

AS level specifications will require students to demonstrate their ability to:

- analyse and evaluate the design of sociological investigations
- analyse and evaluate the method(s) used in these investigations to collect and record evidence.

Interpretation and evaluation of evidence

AS level specifications will require students to demonstrate their ability to:

- distinguish between facts, opinions and value judgements
- select and apply a range of relevant concepts and theories
- interpret qualitative and quantitative data
- identify and evaluate significant social trends shown in evidence
- evaluate theories, arguments and evidence.

Presentation of evidence and argument

AS level specifications will require students to demonstrate their ability to:

- organise evidence and communicate arguments in a coherent manner
- demonstrate an awareness and understanding of theoretical debates in sociology
- use evidence to support and sustain arguments and conclusions.

Draft

3.4 Aims and Learning outcomes

We believe in developing specifications that help you bring the subject to life and inspire your students to achieve more.

We've created teacher-friendly specifications based on extensive research and engagement with teachers. They're designed to be straightforward and accessible so that you can tailor the delivery of the course to suit your needs. We aim to encourage students to become responsible for their own learning, confident in discussing ideas, innovative and engaged.

The study of AS Level Sociology focuses on contemporary society. Studying sociology fosters the development of critical and reflective thinking with a respect for social diversity. It provides students with an awareness of the importance of social structure and social action in explaining social issues. Students are encouraged to develop their own sociological awareness through active engagement with the contemporary social world.

This specification encourages students to:

- acquire knowledge and a critical understanding of contemporary social processes and social changes
- appreciate the significance of theoretical and conceptual issues in sociological debate
- understand and evaluate sociological methodology and a range of research methods through active involvement in the research process
- develop skills that enable individuals to focus on their personal identity, roles and responsibilities within society
- develop a lifelong interest in social issues.

Following a broad, coherent, satisfying and worthwhile course of study allows students to reflect on their own experience of the social world to enhance their ability to play informed roles within different social contexts.

The main purpose of this qualification is to provide students with a suitable foundation for the study of sociology or related courses in Higher Education. A further purpose of this qualification is to prepare and develop students' interest in and enthusiasm for the subject and inspire students intending to pursue careers or further study in social sciences, or as part of a general education.

The aim of this course is to foster critical thinking, empathy, and informed discussion, while recognising and respecting the diverse experiences of all students.

3.4.1 Approaching sensitive content

This sociology qualification explores a range of social issues, some of which may be sensitive or challenging in nature. Topics may include, but are not limited to, inequality, discrimination, crime, violence, poverty, mental health, and social conflict.

These themes are studied in an academic and critical context to promote understanding of social structures, experiences, and perspectives. However, some content may resonate personally with students or be emotionally challenging.

Teachers are encouraged to approach such topics with sensitivity and to create a respectful, inclusive classroom environment where students feel safe to engage, reflect, and, where appropriate, step back from discussions. Students are likewise encouraged to communicate with their teacher if they feel uncomfortable and to access support where needed.

Draft

4. Assessment

4.1 Forms of assessment

For this qualification students must take all components as detailed in the table below.

Cambridge OCR Level 3 Advanced Subsidiary GCE in Sociology	
(01) Socialisation, culture and identity	
1 hour 30 minutes Written paper Externally assessed 2 sections Students answer **all** questions in Section A and **all** questions from **one** option in Section B 50 marks **50% of the total AS Level**	**Section A: Introducing socialisation, culture and identity** Compulsory questions, one based on source material. Includes one 2-, 8-, and 15-mark question. **Section B: Options** Students choose **one** from a choice of three options: • families and relationships • youth subcultures • media. Includes one 2-, 8-, and 15-mark question.
(02) Researching and understanding social inequalities	
1 hour 30 minutes Written paper Externally assessed 2 sections Students answer **all** questions 50 marks **50% of the total AS Level**	**Section A: Research methods and researching social inequalities** Compulsory questions, one based on source material. Includes two 2-, one 8- and one 15-mark question. **Section B: Understanding social inequalities** Compulsory questions. Includes one 8- and one 15-mark question.

Draft

4.2 Assessment of extended response

The assessment materials for this qualification provide students with the opportunity to demonstrate their ability to construct and develop a sustained and coherent line of reasoning which is relevant, substantiated and logically structured. Marks for extended responses are integrated into the marking criteria and further details can be found in the mark schemes.

4.3 Assessment objectives (AOs)

There are three assessment objectives in the Cambridge OCR Level 3 Advanced Subsidiary GCE in Sociology and these are detailed in the table below.

Students are expected to:

Assessment Objectives	
AO1	Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of: • sociological theories, concepts and evidence • sociological research methods.
AO2	Apply sociological theories, concepts, evidence and research methods to a range of issues.
AO3	Analyse and evaluate sociological theories, concepts, evidence and research methods in order to: • present arguments • make judgements • draw conclusions.

The relationship between the assessment objectives and the components are shown in the following table:

Component	% of overall AS Level in Sociology*		
	AO1	AO2	AO3
Socialisation, culture and identity (H183/01)	48	32	20
Researching and understanding social inequalities (H183/02)	48	32	20

Draft

4.4 Command words

The table below highlights the command words used in this qualification's assessments.

Key command word	Mark Tariff	Assessment Objective	Weighting	Definition	In context
State	2	AO1	100%	Give a clear, brief answer without explanation.	This is a points-based question. Students are required to give a brief statement showing they know the given concept and provide an appropriate, relevant example to support the statement given. E.g., Component 01, Questions 1,4,7,10 and Component 02, Questions 1 and 2.
Explain	8	AO1 AO2	50% 50%	Use information to demonstrate understanding of why something is the case or how something happens.	**Component 01** Show knowledge and understanding of the issue in the question, giving clear reasons demonstrating this. Develop the answer by using relevant sociological concepts, theories, evidence and apply them to the issue in the question. The explanation should be clear, developed and directly applied to the issue in the question. E.g., Question 5, 8 and 11.
					Component 02 Show knowledge and understanding of the issue in the question, giving clear reasons demonstrating this. Sociological research methods should be applied to the issue in the question, supported by concepts, theories and evidence. The explanation should be clear, developed and directly applied to the issue in the question. E.g., Question 5. The weighting for this will always be as follows: AO1 Knowledge and understanding of sociological

Draft

Key command word	Mark Tariff	Assessment Objective	Weighting	Definition	In context
					theories, concepts and evidence – 3 marks AO1 Knowledge and understanding of sociological research methods – 1 mark AO2 Application of sociological theories, concepts and evidence to an issue – 1 mark AO2 Application of sociological research methods to an issue – 3 marks.
Explain (with source)	8	AO1 AO2	50% 50%	Use information from the source material to demonstrate understanding of why something is the case or how something happens.	**Component 01** Use information from the source and student's own sociological knowledge to clearly explain a point. Students should identify something from the source, develop it with sociological ideas, and apply it to the issue shown in source/question. Relevant concepts, theories and evidence should be applied clearly to the issue in the source and question. E.g., Question 2.
					Component 02 Use information from the source and student's own sociological knowledge to clearly explain a point. Students should identify something relevant from the source, develop it with sociological ideas, and apply it to the issue shown in source/question. Relevant sociological research methods should be applied clearly to the issue in the source and question. E.g., Question 3.

Draft

Key command word	Mark Tariff	Assessment Objective	Weighting	Definition	In context
How far	15	AO1 AO2 AO3	40% 27% 33%	Weigh up the merits of different factors or points of view to reach a conclusion and judgement.	**Component 01** Show sociological knowledge and apply it to the issue in the question. Students should present arguments that support the view and arguments that challenge it using sociological theories, concepts and evidence. These should be analysed making clear judgements about their strengths and weaknesses. A conclusion should be made about how far students agree with the view. E.g., Question 3, 6, 9 and 12.
					Component 02 Show sociological knowledge and apply it to the issue in the question. Students should present arguments that support the view and arguments that challenge it using sociological or research methods. These should be analysed making clear judgements about their strengths and weaknesses. A conclusion should be made about how far students agree with the view. E.g., Question 4. Show sociological knowledge and apply it to the issue in the question. Students should present arguments that support the view and arguments that challenge it using sociological theories, concepts and evidence and/or research methods. These should be analysed making clear judgements about their strengths and weaknesses. A conclusion should be made about how far students agree with the view. E.g., Question 6#.

#Indicates synoptic assessment, see section 4.5.

Draft

4.5 Synoptic assessment

Synoptic assessment is the students' understanding of the connections between different elements of the subject. It draws together the knowledge, understanding and skills learnt through study across the AS Level Sociology course.

Synoptic assessment includes the explicit assessment of understanding of the connections between the nature of sociological thought; methods of sociological enquiry; and the two core themes using higher order skills.

Synoptic learning in sociology engages students in theoretical debate while encouraging an active involvement in the research process. It fosters a critical awareness of contemporary social processes and change.

Synoptic assessment is included in Section B on component 02. Students are encouraged to think holistically and develop their skills of thinking as a sociologist. Students can identify opportunities to include synopticity in their answers where they see the statement 'You **must** use your knowledge and understanding from across the full course of study' as part of the question text.

Credit will be awarded to responses that effectively integrate material from across different areas of the specification. Higher-level responses should demonstrate synoptic awareness by drawing on knowledge, understanding, and application from at least one other component. Where used, research methods should not be discussed in isolation but rather embedded meaningfully in relation to the sociological topic under examination.

Sociology is a highly synoptic subject so knowledge shown from across the course of study will be credited in any response providing it is valid. This is shown through the inclusion of 'and any other relevant response' on mark schemes.

4.6 Calculating qualification results

A student's overall qualification grade for the Cambridge OCR Level 3 Advanced Subsidiary GCE in Sociology will be calculated by adding together their marks from the two question papers taken to give their total weighted mark.

This mark will then be compared to the qualification level grade boundaries for the relevant exam series to determine the student's overall qualification grade.

Draft

5. Admin

5.1 Before you start

5.1.1 Prior knowledge, learning and progression

No prior knowledge of the subject is required.

Throughout the course of study, students are encouraged to develop a critical awareness of sociological concepts and issues in contemporary society. This specification is designed to foster the development of critical and reflective thinking with a respect for social diversity, and to encourage an awareness of the importance of social structure and social action in explaining social issues.

5.1.2 Total qualification time

Total qualification time (TQT) is the total amount of time, in hours, expected to be spent by a student to achieve a qualification. It includes both guided learning hours and hours spent in preparation, study and assessment.

The total qualification time for AS Level Sociology is 180 hours. The total guided learning time is 180 hours.

5.1.3 Overlap with other qualifications

There is no significant overlap between the content of this specification and those for other Advanced GCE qualifications.

5.1.4 Qualification availability outside of England

This qualification is available in England. For Wales and Northern Ireland please check the Qualifications in Wales Portal (QIW) or the Northern Ireland Department of Education Performance Measures / Northern Ireland Entitlement Framework Qualifications Accreditation Number (NIEFQAN) list to see current availability.

5.1.5 Language

This qualification is available in English only. All assessment materials are available in English only and all candidate work must be in English.

5.1.6 Assessment availability

There will be one examination series available each year in May/June to **all** students.

This specification will be certificated from the June 2028 examination series onwards.

All examined question papers must be taken in the same examination series at the end of the course.

5.1.7 Special consideration

Special consideration is a post-assessment adjustment to marks or grades to reflect temporary injury, illness or other indisposition at the time the assessment was taken. Detailed information about eligibility for special consideration can be found in the JCQ publication *A guide to the special consideration process*.

5.1.8 Malpractice

Any breach of the regulations for the conduct of examinations may constitute malpractice (which includes maladministration) and must be reported to Cambridge OCR as soon as it is detected.

Draft

Detailed information on malpractice can be found in the JCQ: *Suspected Malpractice in Examinations and Assessments: Policies and Procedures.*

5.1.9 Access arrangements and reasonable adjustments

Reasonable adjustments and access arrangements allow students with special educational needs, disabilities or temporary injuries to access the assessment and show what they know and can do, without changing the demands of the assessment. Applications for these should be made before the examination series. Detailed information about eligibility for access arrangements can be found in the JCQ publication *Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments.*

5.1.10 External assessment arrangements

Regulations governing examination arrangements are contained in the JCQ: *Instructions for conducting examinations.*

5.1.10.1 Private candidates

Private candidates may enter for Cambridge OCR assessments.

A private candidate is someone who pursues a course of study independently but takes an examination or assessment at an approved examination centre. A private candidate may be a part-time student, someone taking a distance learning course, or someone being tutored privately. They must be based in the UK.

Private candidates need to contact Cambridge OCR approved centres to establish whether they are prepared to host them as a private candidate. The centre may charge for this facility and Cambridge OCR recommends that the arrangement is made early in the course.

Further guidance for private candidates may be found on the Cambridge OCR website.

Draft

5.2 Making entries

5.2.1 Pre-assessment

5.2.1.1 Final entries

Final entries provide Cambridge OCR with detailed data for each student, showing each assessment to be taken. It is essential that you use the correct entry code, considering the relevant entry rules.

Final entries must be submitted to Cambridge OCR by the published deadlines or late entry fees will apply.

All students taking the Cambridge OCR Level 3 Advanced Subsidiary GCE in Sociology must be entered for H183.

Entry code	Title	Component code	Component title	Assessment type
H183	Cambridge OCR Level 3 Advanced Subsidiary GCE in Sociology	01	Socialisation, culture and identity	External Assessment
		02	Researching and understanding social inequalities	External Assessment

5.2.1.2 Collecting evidence of student performance to ensure resilience in the qualifications system

Regulators have published guidance on collecting evidence of student performance as part of long-term contingency arrangements to improve the resilience of the qualifications system. You should review and consider this guidance when delivering this qualification to students at your centre.

For more detailed information on collecting evidence of student performance, please visit our website.

5.2.2 Retaking the qualification

Students can retake the qualification as many times as they wish. They retake all components of the qualification.

Draft

5.3 After the exams

5.3.1 Results and certificates

5.3.1.1 Grade Scale

AS Level qualifications are graded on the scale: A, B, C, D, E, where A is the highest. Students who do not to reach the minimum standard of E will be Unclassified (U). Only subjects in which grades A to E are attained will be recorded on certificates.

5.3.1.2 Results

Results are released to centres and students for information and to allow any queries to be resolved **before** certificates are issued.

Centres will have access to the following results information for each student:

- The grade for the qualification.
- The raw mark for each component.
- The total weighted mark for the qualification.

The following supporting information will be available:

- Raw mark grade boundaries for each component.
- Weighted mark grade boundaries for the qualification.

Until certificates are issued, results are deemed to be provisional and may be subject to amendment.

5.3.2 Post-results services

A number of post-results services are available:

- **Review of results –** If you are not happy with the outcome of a student's results, centres may request a review of marking.
- **Missing and incomplete results –** This service should be used if an individual subject result for a student is missing, or the student has been omitted entirely from the results supplied.
- **Access to scripts –** Centres can request access to marked scripts.

Draft

CAMBRIDGE
OCR

Examine *with* us



- Build confidence supporting your students with assessment
- Enhance subject knowledge
- Great for professional development

Join our team:
ocr.org.uk/assessor

Contact the team at:
01223 553998
sociology@ocr.org.uk
ocr.org.uk

To stay up to date with all the relevant news about our qualifications, register for email updates at **ocr.org.uk/updates**

Visit our Online Support Centre at **support.ocr.org.uk**

Sign up for **Teach Cambridge** to access your planning, teaching and assessment support material.

CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS & ASSESSMENT

Cambridge OCR is part of Cambridge University Press & Assessment, a department of the University of Cambridge.

Cambridge OCR is a Company Limited by Guarantee and an exempt charity. Registered in England.
Registered office: The Triangle Building, Shaftesbury Road, Cambridge, CB2 8EA. Registered company number: 3484466.

We operate academic and vocational qualifications regulated by Ofqual, Qualifications Wales and CCEA as listed in their qualifications registers.

We are committed to providing a fully accessible experience across all our products, platforms, and websites. Find out more about our accessibility standards.

© Cambridge OCR 2026. All rights reserved. We retain the copyright on all our publications. However, our registered centres are permitted to copy and distribute our material for their own internal use, in line with any specific restrictions detailed in the publication. Find out more about our copyright policies.

We update our publications regularly so please check you have the most up-to-date version.

We cannot be held responsible for the persistence or accuracy of URLs for external or third-party internet websites referred to in this publication and do not guarantee that any content on such websites is, or will remain, accurate or appropriate.

When we update our specifications, you'll see a new version number and a summary of the changes. While we do our best to reflect these changes in all associated resources on Teach Cambridge, if you notice any discrepancies, please refer to the latest specification on our website and let us know.

Our resources do not represent any teaching method we expect you to use. We cannot be held responsible for any errors or omissions in our resources.