

A hand is shown in the lower right corner, holding a piece of white chalk and drawing on a dark chalkboard. The drawing consists of several stick figures, each enclosed in a circle. Arrows are drawn pointing outwards from the circles, suggesting a process or flow. The background is dark, making the white chalk lines stand out.

AS and A-level Sociology

A companion guide to
our new specifications

Find out more at:
aqa.org.uk/sociology

AQA 

New AS and A-levels

What the changes mean for you

A-levels are changing across the board, with government introducing new regulations about subject content and assessment.

All subjects are moving from modular to linear assessment, with exams at the end of a two-year A-level course. The AS becomes a stand-alone qualification, which doesn't contribute to the A-level grade.

Faced with change, we've taken a fresh look at our qualifications, working with teachers, universities and others to raise the bar. We've refreshed and updated our offer, building on the best of what went before. With the needs of teachers front of mind, we're making the move to the new specifications as simple as possible.

What this means for Sociology

In Sociology we've adapted our popular specification to make the best even better. We've improved our support, developed new, inspiring resources, and enhanced our assessment to ensure that your students receive the result they deserve.

Read the specifications: aqa.org.uk/sociology

Speak to us: call 01483 477 822 or email sociology@aqa.org.uk

Find out more about changes to A-levels: aqa.org.uk/alevelchanges

AS and A-level Sociology: key dates

September 2014	Launch events: face-to-face and online
Summer 2015	Preparing to teach events
September 2015	First teaching of new AS and A-level Sociology
Summer 2016	First examinations for new AS Sociology
Summer 2017	First examinations for new A-level Sociology

Our response to change

Turning new rules into classroom inspiration

When change comes you can ignore it, live with it or embrace it. We decided to embrace it, seizing this chance to listen and learn before acting to produce best in class qualifications.

As an education charity and the largest provider of qualifications in England, meeting the needs of teachers and students is central to what we do. Great teaching brings every subject to life and our new specifications are designed to support you in the classroom with updated content, resources and support.

But we couldn't do this on our own.

Listening

Government and the regulator told us the new rules. We listened to be clear about what was needed.

Working together

Through workshops, seminars and conferences, we worked with thousands of teachers across all subjects. We wanted to know what you needed – not guess what you might want. Your views, hopes and aspirations have been crucial.

Learning lessons

With all of the insights and ideas from so many teachers, we paid attention and refined our new specifications to ensure we hit the mark.

Taking to the road

With two double decker buses our staff visited 24 locations, meeting teachers from 274 schools and colleges. These teachers gave us more feedback on our draft specifications and materials.

Building support

While the views of teachers have been crucial, we've also worked with universities, subject associations and others. This ensured that our new specifications have the content, credibility and rigour to support your students into the next stage of their lives, whether in higher education or employment.

Creating something new

Now we have created new specifications, support and resources that will inspire learning and help to realise potential.

See how we're supporting teachers through the changes to A-levels at: aqa.org.uk/changes-to-exams

AS and A-level Sociology

What's changed and what's stayed the same

Teachers told us that our A-level was working well so we have taken an evolutionary approach to change, reducing the amount teachers have to teach, and refreshing the content to bring it up to date.

We've listened and learnt from teachers, universities and the British Sociological Association to devise a rigorous, relevant specification that has adapted to the new regulations while minimising the impact on your day-to-day teaching.

Ongoing excellence

We have built on the strong foundations of the existing, successful specifications, refreshing the content and streamlining some topics, notably Crime and Deviance.

Compulsory subjects

The topics of Education and Crime and Deviance are currently very popular choices among students. In the new specifications these are both now compulsory for the A-level, with Education compulsory for the AS.

Choice

We have retained a varied and appealing choice of optional topics so you will be able to teach – and your students study – areas of specific interest.

Greater relevance

We've taken into account advances in the subject and global change to ensure that you and your students will find it relevant to the world you live in.

End of year exams

Like the previous specifications, Sociology at AS and A-level will continue to be assessed purely by examination at the end of the course, with no coursework.

“We're determined to make the transition to the new spec as straightforward as possible”

Rupert Sheard is Qualifications Manager for our Sociology A-level. A teacher for ten years, Rupert also spent a decade working in the Department for Education and has brought to bear his teaching and policy experience in bringing the new specification to life.

“Sociology is a really important subject to us at AQA and we've taken great care to produce this new specification. We're determined to give teachers the support they need to teach it successfully and we've gained a great deal from their input. We've also worked with a panel of experts from higher education and the British Sociological Association to make sure it includes the most up to date thinking and developments in the subject.

Sociology teachers are real enthusiasts and we've devoted a great deal of effort to ensure that they are supported, especially through this period of change. To help with this there's a lot of continuity with the previous specification and we've ensured that the AS is co-teachable with the A-level. The specification is suitable for mixed ability classes, but also provides stretch and challenge and includes up-to-date content with widespread appeal.

With the AS now a standalone qualification, it might also prove to be a



Rupert Sheard, Qualifications Manager

very popular choice for students taking vocational qualifications, as it fits very well with a wide range of subjects such as nursing and childcare, for example.

I hope that teachers and their students will enjoy the new specification as much as the last one.”

Why choose our new AS and A-level Sociology specifications?

1 Co-teachability of AS and A-level

Our new specifications are co-teachable, allowing AS and first year A-level students to be taught together in the same class. We have structured the A-level so that topics in the first year form a good introduction for those studying Sociology for the first time. Mixing AS and first year A-level should ensure more vibrant lessons and help your planning, resourcing and timetabling.

2 In-year switching

With Sociology often a fourth choice, many students take the AS with a view to dropping it after one year. Those that enjoy the subject have been able to switch to the A-level during the first year – and our new specification allows this in-year switching to continue. Flexibility in your students' interests is built-in.

3 New resources and support to help teaching and learning

Our resources, events and support – along with a choice of new AQA-approved textbooks – will help you to help your students fulfill their potential. Practising teachers, who know what it takes to plan, prepare and teach the course effectively, have developed these with us.

4 Relevant and contemporary content

We've refreshed the subject content, so each topic takes into account contemporary social trends and developments in the subject, making it easier to relate to your students' lives. Globalisation is a key theme that runs throughout the course.

5 Progression to HE or the world of work

Using your teaching skills to help you deliver the course content, your students will learn how to analyse arguments and evidence, think critically about social issues and make informed judgements, preparing them for further study or employment. We have developed this in line with a Higher Education panel who are supportive of our approach.

6 Assessment you can trust

The new specifications have a very clear, well-structured assessment structure and our exemplar materials will show you how it's applied to real student work. And as every student will take compulsory topics our examiners will have a big spread of marks to ensure comparability and fairness. A-level students will be marked to a standard that builds on GCSE and AS.

7 Suitable for mixed ability classes

While our Sociology AS and A-level specifications have the academic rigour you would expect, they remain suitable and appropriate for students of all abilities and interests.



What's in the specifications?

How are they assessed?

We're confident that you will enjoy teaching the new specifications – and your students will be motivated by what they learn.

Assessment objectives

The three assessment objectives for Sociology at AS and A-level are:

AO1.

Demonstrate and communicate knowledge and understanding of sociological theories, concepts and evidence, and 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 judgments and draw conclusions.

Government requirements

Students must study the following two core themes in line with government requirements.

What you will teach

The table shows an overview of the topics studied at AS and A-level.

	Year 1	Year 2
A-level	Education Methods in Context Research Methods Option	Crime and Deviance Theory and Methods Option
AS	As above	

1. Socialisation, culture and identity
2. Social differentiation, power and stratification.

Your students must show the following skills, and relate them to their sociological knowledge and understanding:

- Collection and recording of evidence
- Interpreting and evaluating evidence
- Presenting evidence and argument.

Turning regulation into inspirational teaching

The regulations don't say exactly how you have to teach these themes – they run like threads through the course content, as they do through society. This means we have the flexibility to be creative.

Students will study the nature of sociological thought, including concepts such as social order, social control, social change, conflict and consensus. They will also learn methods of sociological inquiry, including research techniques and practical and ethical issues in collecting data.

A focus on UK society and our place in a global context

The course has a strong focus on contemporary UK society, examining its place in a global context. Much of the content from the previous successful specification has been retained and refreshed.

AS level

Now as standalone qualification, the AS includes the compulsory topics of Education, Methods in Context and Research Methods. For the exam, students must then answer a question from one of four topic choices.

These are:

- Culture and identity
- Families and households
- Health
- Work, poverty and welfare.

Students are examined at the end of the course by two written papers:

Paper 1 – Education with Methods in Context (90 minutes)

Paper 2 – Research methods and Topics in Sociology (90 minutes).

A-level

The first year of the A-level covers the same ground as the AS. So if you have a student who thrives and enjoys it so much that they would like to take the A-level, they can switch.

For the final year of the A-level, students must take the compulsory topic of Crime and Deviance.

This was popular in the previous specification and now comes with refreshed, slimmed down content to make it more manageable.

A-level students must then choose one more topic from a choice of four. These are:

- Beliefs in society
- Global Development
- The media
- Stratification and differentiation.

A-level students will be expected to show more range and depth of knowledge and understanding than AS students, together with more highly developed skills in analysis, interpretation and evaluation.

The A-level is assessed by three written exam papers at the end of the course:

Paper 1 – Education with Theory and Methods (two hours)

Paper 2 – Topics in Sociology (two hours)

Paper 3 – Crime and Deviance with Theory and Methods (two hours).

Find out more

Read the spec in full at [aqa.org.uk/sociology](https://www.aqa.org.uk/sociology)

Speak to the Sociology team on 01483 477 822 or sociology@aqa.org.uk

The results your students deserve

Assessment you can trust

After all of their hard work, you need to be confident that your students' work is marked fairly, consistently and reliably. That's our priority too.

Getting the marking right

The quality of marking is at the heart of our assessment procedures. As before, both AS and A-level will be 100% assessed by examinations.

- Clear, consistent and well-structured question papers ensure students understand precisely what is being asked of them.
- Exemplar materials with student answers and commentary from our most senior examiners help you understand how the mark scheme is applied.

Assessment support

Support from our Sociology subject team combined with our suite of new resources will help you to prepare your students for their exams.

Understanding assessment

To show exactly how we award grades and give you a better understanding of how assessment works, we've produced a short animated film.

- Visit [aqa.org.uk/explaining-assessment](https://www.aqa.org.uk/explaining-assessment) to see our Explaining assessment and How a specification is created videos
- You can analyse your students' results with Enhanced Results Analysis (ERA), our free online results analysis tool. Register at [aqa.org.uk/era](https://www.aqa.org.uk/era)
- For information about results, including grade boundaries and our post-results services, visit [aqa.org.uk/results](https://www.aqa.org.uk/results)

Resources to support great teaching

We're here to support you through the changes and we've worked closely with experienced, practising teachers to develop high quality materials and support that will help you teach memorable lessons.

Whatever your experience in teaching Sociology, these will help you to plan lessons, teach and assess your students.

Here's an overview of what's available to help you and your students succeed.

- Face-to-face events
- Schemes of work and lesson plans
- Specimen exam papers

- Exemplar material, showing how student responses are marked in light of the new mark schemes
- Training and professional development opportunities.

New textbooks and digital resources

To support teaching and learning we're working with established publishers to produce a choice of material specifically focused on our new specification.

You'll also be able to communicate directly with the Sociology subject team by telephone and email. Our trained staff will be happy to deal with any queries.



Find out more

Check what courses and events are available:
[coursesandevents.aqa.org.uk](https://www.aqa.org.uk/coursesandevents)

Read more about professional development opportunities:
[aqa.org.uk/professional-development](https://www.aqa.org.uk/professional-development)

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You will always find the most up to date information on our website at www.aqa.org.uk/sociology
aqa.org.uk

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