

Learner Guide

Cambridge International AS & A Level Sociology 9699

For examination from 2021



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Section 1: About this guide

This guide explains what you need to know about your Cambridge International AS & A Level Sociology course and examinations.

This guide will help you to:

- understand what skills you should develop by taking this AS & A Level course
- understand how you will be assessed
- understand what we are looking for in the answers you write
- plan your revision programme
- revise, by providing revision tips and an interactive revision checklist (Section 7).

Following a Cambridge International AS & A Level programme will help you to develop abilities that universities value highly, including a deep understanding of your subject; higher order thinking skills (analysis, critical thinking, problem solving); presenting ordered and coherent arguments; independent learning and research.

Studying Cambridge International AS & A Level Sociology will help you to develop a set of transferable skills, including the ability to think sociologically about contemporary social, cultural and political issues and become a reflexive, innovative and engaged learner.

Section 2: Syllabus content – what you need to know

This section gives you an outline of the syllabus content for this course.

Content section	Assessment component	Topics included
Socialisation and the creation of social identity	Paper 1 Socialisation, identity and methods of research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The process of learning and socialisation • Social control, conformity and resistance • Social identity and change
Methods of research		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Types of data, methods and research design • Approaches to sociological research • Research issues
Theories of the family and social change	Paper 2 The Family	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perspectives on the role of the family • Diversity and social change
Family roles and changing relationships		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gender equality and experiences of family life • Age and family life
Education and society	Paper 3 Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Theories about the role of education • Education and social mobility • Influences on the curriculum
Education and inequality		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intelligence and educational attainment • Social class and educational attainment • Ethnicity and educational attainment • Gender and educational attainment
Globalisation Key debates, concepts and perspectives	Paper 4 Globalisation, Media and Religion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perspectives on globalisation • Globalisation and identity • Globalisation, power and politics
Contemporary Issues		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Globalisation, poverty and inequalities • Globalisation and migration • Globalisation and crime
Media Ownership and control of the Media		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Traditional media and the new media • Theories of the media and influences on media content • The impact of the new media

Content section	Assessment component	Topics included
Media representation and effects		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Media representations of class gender, ethnicity and age groups Different models of media effects The impact of media on behaviour
Religion Religion and social order		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Religion and society Religion and social order Religion as a source of social change
The influence of religion		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The secularisation debate Gender, feminism and religion Religion and postmodernity

Make sure you always check the latest syllabus, which is available from our [public website](#). This will also explain the different combinations of components you can take.

Prior knowledge

Candidates beginning this course are not expected to studied sociology previously. However, the content of the Cambridge IGCSE™ Sociology 0495 will provide a useful introduction to the subject.

Key concepts

Key concepts are essential ideas that help you to develop a deep understanding of your subject and make links between different aspects of the course. The key concepts for Cambridge International AS & A Level Sociology are:

- Inequality and opportunity**
 Inequality has a major influence on people's opportunities and life choices. Sociologists study the different forms of inequality (age, ethnicity, gender, class) seeking to understand why inequality exists and how it affects different sections of society.
- Power, control, resistance**
 Power is important in understanding how order and control are achieved in society. There are many different theories about who holds power and how power is used to shape human behaviour. Sociologists are also interested in the ways people oppose and resist the exercise of power.
- Social change and development**
 Understanding how societies have changed and developed helps sociologists to make sense of the way people live today. The change from traditional society to modern industrial society is particularly important. The terms 'modernity' and 'postmodernity' are used to reflect on this transition and on contemporary issues, such as how societies are affected by globalisation and the digital revolution in technology.
- Socialisation, culture and identity**
 Sociologists believe that people learn how they are expected to behave through socialisation. The norms and values learned through socialisation may vary between cultures, impacting on social identity. The study of different social identities is central to sociology.
- Structure and human agency**
 A central debate in sociology concerns the relationship between the individual and society: is behaviour shaped by wider social forces or is the social world shaped by the actions of individuals. Structural theories focus on how people's behaviour is constrained by social systems and institutions. Action theories emphasise how individuals establish meaning through social interaction and how this impacts on the behaviour of social groups and institutions.

Section 3: How you will be assessed?

About the examinations

There are three different combinations of papers you can take to obtain a Sociology AS or A Level qualification:

- AS Level only: Paper 1 and Paper 2 are taken at the end of the first year
- A Level: taken over two years with Paper 1 and Paper 3 taken at the end of the first year, completing the A Level exam Paper 3 and Paper 4 at the end of year two
- A Level where all components are examined at the end of the two-year course.

These are summarised in the diagram. Find out from your teacher which papers you will be taking.

Route		Paper 1	Paper 2	Paper 3	Paper 4
1	AS Level only All AS components are taken in the same exam series	✓	✓		
2	A Level (staged over two years) Year 1 complete AS Level components Year 2 complete A Level components	✓	✓	✓	✓
3	A Level All components are taken in the same series	✓	✓	✓	✓

About the papers

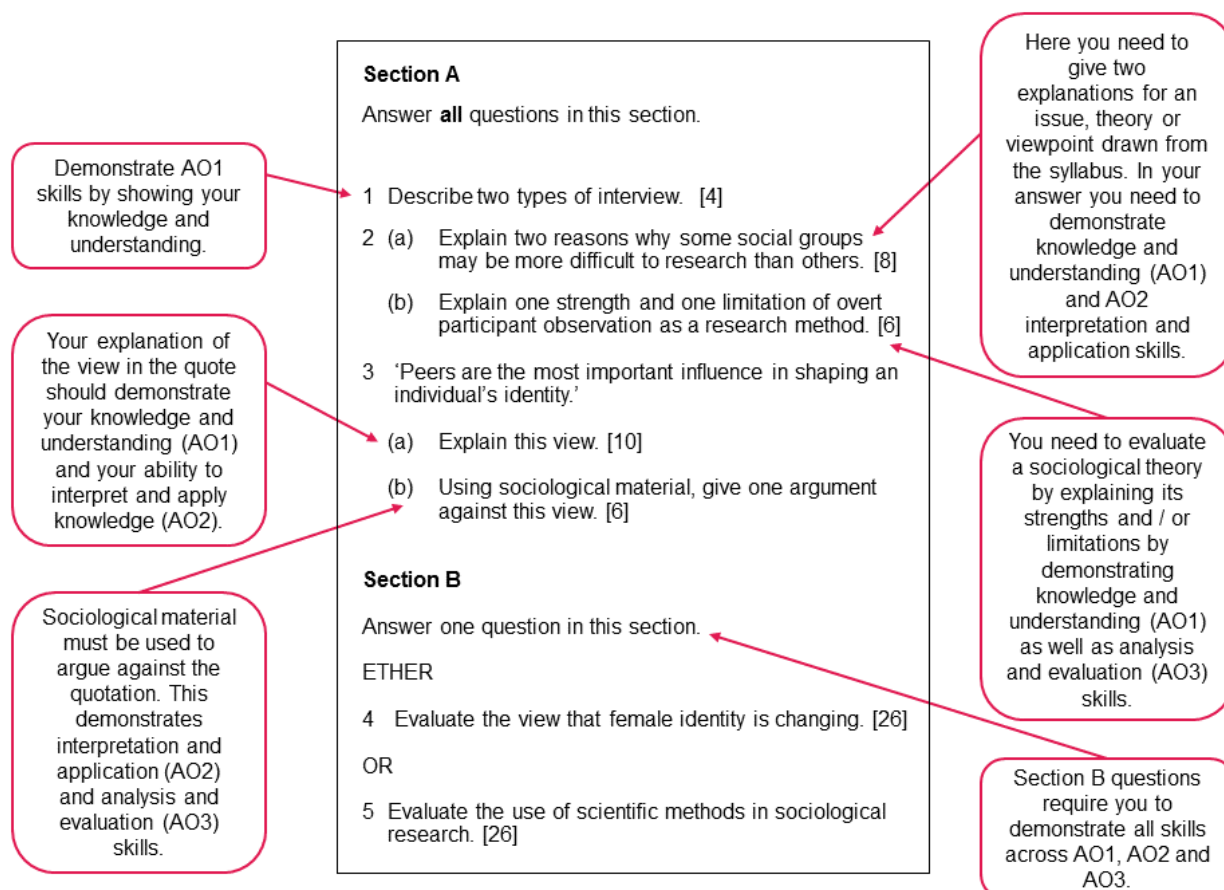
The table below gives you further information about the examination papers:

Paper	Time and marks	Questions	Percentage of total mark
Paper 1: Socialisation, identity and methods of research	1 hour 30 minutes 60 marks	You will answer 4 questions. Section A: three compulsory questions Section B: one essay (26 marks) from a choice of two	50% of the AS Level 25% of the A Level
Paper 2: The Family	1 hour 30 minutes 60 marks	You will have 4 questions. Section A: three compulsory questions Section B: one essay (26 marks) from a choice of two	50% of the AS Level 25% of the A Level
Paper 3: Education	1 hour 15 minutes 50 marks	You will have 4 compulsory questions Question 4 is an essay (26 marks)	20% of the A Level
Paper 4: Globalisation, Media and Religion	1 hour 45 minutes 70 marks	You will answer two essay questions (35 marks) from two of the following sections (they must be from different sections) Section A: Globalisation Section B: Media Section C: Religion	30% of the A Level

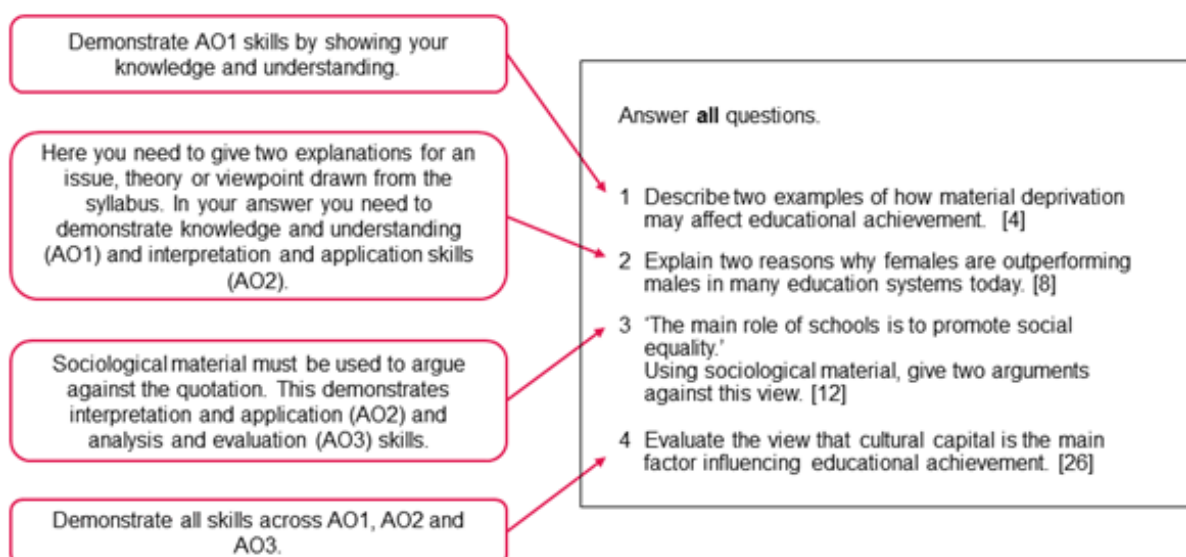
The questions in each paper assess different skills. The diagrams below show which questions test each of the assessment objectives.

Paper 1 and Paper 2

Both of these papers have the same layout and each of the questions test the same assessment objectives.



Paper 3



Paper 4

Answer **two** questions in total, each from a different section.

Section A: Globalisation

All Paper 4 questions require you to demonstrate your skills across AO1, AO2 and AO3.

EITHER

- 1 'Global migration has only economic consequences for society.' Evaluate this view. [35]

OR

- 2 'It is becoming harder to detect and punish global crime.' Evaluate this view. [35]

Section B: Media

EITHER

- 3 'The hypodermic syringe model provides the best explanation of media effects.' Evaluate this view. [35]

OR

- 4 'The media reflects the interests of all groups in society equally.' Evaluate this view. [35]

Section C: Religion

EITHER

- 5 'Religion supports the interests of the rich and powerful.' Evaluate this view. [35]

OR

- 6 'Religion has lost its social significance.' Evaluate this view. [35]

Section 4: What skills will be assessed?

The examiners take account of the following skills areas (assessment objectives) in the examinations:

Assessment objectives (AO)	What does the AO mean?
AO1 Knowledge and Understanding	Demonstrating knowledge and understanding of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> sociological concepts, theories, evidence, views research methods, arguments and debates The theoretical and practical considerations that influence the design and execution of sociological research Relevant sociological research findings.
AO2 Interpretation and application	Interpreting sociological material, including concepts, theories and evidence, and applying this to a range of issues. This includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Using relevant sociological material to support points or develop arguments Explaining how sociological material is applicable to a particular issue or question Demonstrating awareness of the links between the concepts, theories and evidence used to support points or develop arguments.
AO3 Analysis and evaluation	Analysis and evaluation Analysing and evaluating sociological theories, evidence, views, research methods and arguments. This includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> explaining the strengths and limitations of sociological theories, views and research methods developing arguments against sociological theories and views investigating sociological theories and arguments to reveal underlying assumptions, value judgements, misconceptions, logical flaws and ideological influences discussing counter viewpoints or evidence to demonstrate the complexity of sociological issues and debates recognising the limitations of, or bias in, sociological and non-sociological evidence reaching conclusions based on a reasoned consideration of available evidence and arguments.

It is important that you know the different weightings (%) of the assessment objectives, as this affects how the examiner will assess your work.

Assessment objectives	Weighting in components %			
	Paper 1	Paper 2	Paper 3	Paper 4
AO1 Knowledge and understanding	40	40	36	26
AO2 Interpretation and application	30	30	28	31
AO3 Analysis and evaluation	30	30	36	43
Total	100	100	100	100

Section 5: Command words

The table below includes command words used in the assessment for this syllabus. The use of the command word will relate to the subject context.

Command word	What it means
Describe	State the points of a topic / give characteristics and main features
Evaluate	Judge or calculate the quality, importance, amount, or value of something
Explain	Set out the purposes or reasons / make the relationships between things evident / provide why and / or how and support with relevant evidence
Give	Produce an answer from a given source or recall / memory

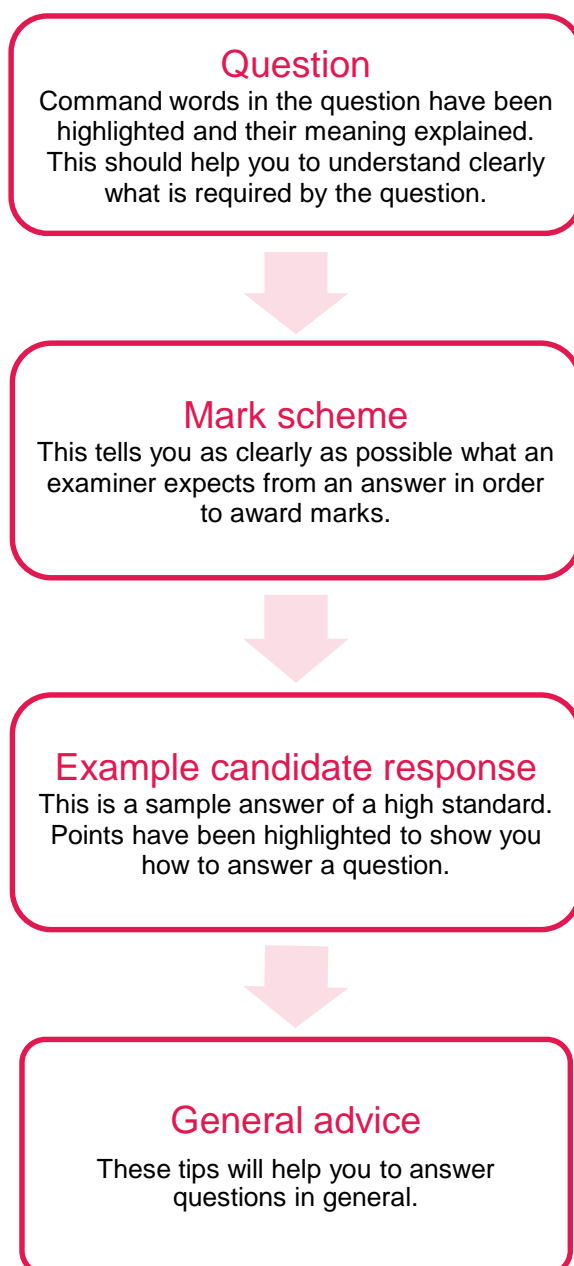
As well as understanding the command words for each question, you should also make yourself aware of how many of your marks are for AO1, AO2 and AO3 skills so that you answer the question appropriately.

Section 6: Example candidate response

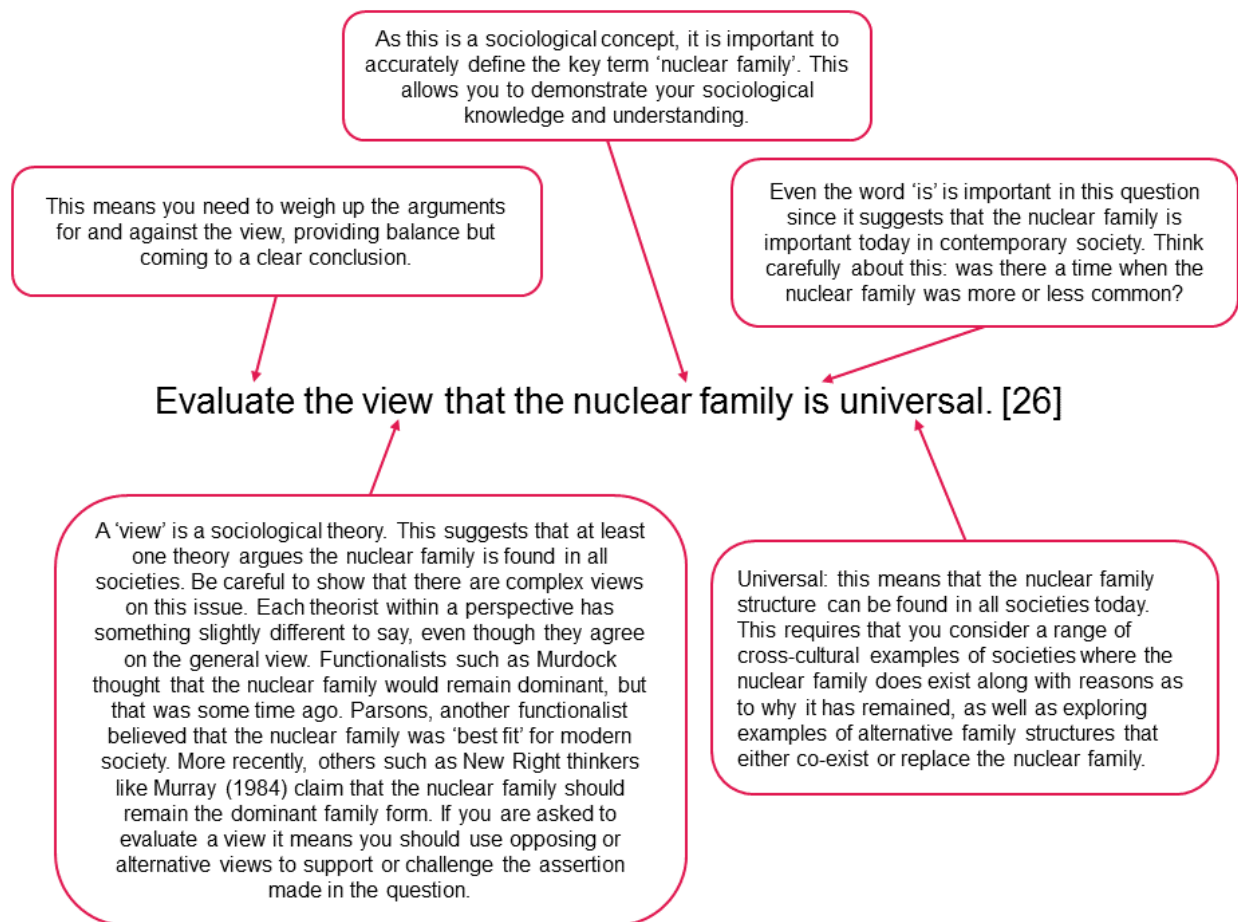
This section takes you through an example question and candidate response. It will help you to see how to identify the command words within questions and to understand what is required in your response. Understanding the questions will help you to know what you need to do with your knowledge. For example, you might need to describe something, explain something, give an argument, or evaluate something.

All information and advice in this section is specific to the example question and response being demonstrated. It should give you an idea of how your responses might be viewed by an examiner, but it is not a list of what to do in all questions. In your own examination, you will need to pay careful attention to what each question is asking you to do.

This section is structured as follows.



Question



This is a broad question which requires you to consider changes to the family structure over time. In order to answer it question well, you need to include a range of theoretical views as well as knowledge about the extent to which the nuclear family is statistically dominant. Remember that you will need to bring in ideas about why alternatives to the nuclear family might be more common in today's society.

Mark scheme

Evaluate the view that the nuclear family is universal.

Indicative content (what candidates are likely to include in their answers) is shown in the table

It is important you present a range of evidence in support and against the views expressed in the question.

Remember not to simply describe alternatives but apply them to the question.

Consider the extent to which Murdock's views are still relevant to today's society.

Where you draw upon research evidence, mention if it is relevant, reliable or valid if appropriate.

Concepts are important in answers, make sure that you either define these or use them in a way which makes it clear that you know what they mean.

Make sure that you state clearly how this evidence challenges the idea that the nuclear family is universal.

	In support	In evaluation
Points	Murdock's cross-cultural study Parsons and functional fit Structural convergence Dominance thesis	Evidence of family diversity used to question the universality of the nuclear family. Cross-cultural evidence against the universality of the nuclear family, e.g. the Nayar, the Lakker, the Ashanti. Laslett and Anderson and/or other historical evidence to criticise Parsons.
Research evidence	Parsons, Murdock, Goode, Skolnick	Stacey, Gough, Keesing, Herndon, Sheeran
Additional concepts	Geographic mobility, basic and irreducible functions	Matrifocal families, female-carer core, same-sex families, new world black families, families of choice.

The above content is indicative and other relevant approaches to the question should be rewarded appropriately.

Or any other relevant point.

- The material selected will be accurate and relevant but not always consistently applied to answering the question.
- Good analysis / evaluation of the view that the nuclear family is universal. The evaluation may be explicit and direct but not sustained or a more descriptive account of evidence and arguments suggesting that the nuclear family is not universal.

Levels of response

Level 5: 22–26 marks

- Very good knowledge and understanding of the view that the nuclear family is universal. The response contains a wide range of detailed points with very good use of concepts and theory / research evidence.
- The material selected will be accurately interpreted, well developed and consistently applied to answering the question.
- Clear, explicit and sustained analysis/evaluation of the view that the nuclear family is universal.

Level 4: 17–21 marks

- Good knowledge and understanding of the view that the nuclear family is universal. The response contains a range of detailed points with good use of concepts and theory or research evidence.

Level 3: 11–16 marks

- Reasonable knowledge and understanding of the view that the nuclear family is universal. The response contains a narrow range of detailed points or a wider range of underdeveloped points, with some use of concepts or theory or research evidence.
- The material selected will be appropriate but its relevance to the question may be unclear or confused at times.
- Some analysis / evaluation of the view that the nuclear family is universal. The evaluation may be a simple juxtaposition of different arguments and theories which are not clearly focused on the question or a few simple points suggesting that the nuclear family is not universal.

Level 2: 6–10 marks

- Basic knowledge and understanding of the view that the nuclear family is universal. The response contains a narrow range of underdeveloped points and may include basic references to concepts or theories or research evidence.
- The material selected is relevant to the topic but lacks focus on or relevance to the specific question.
- Any analysis or evaluation is likely to be incidental, confused or simply assertive.

Level 1: 1–5 marks

- Limited knowledge and understanding of the view that the nuclear family is universal. The response contains only assertive points or common-sense observations.
- There is little or no application of sociological material.
- Little or no attempt at analysis or evaluation.

Level 0: 0 marks

- No response worthy of credit.

Example candidate response

Learner response	Examiner comments
<p>According to Murdock (1949) ¹, a nuclear family is that which has two parents of each gender, one or more children, common residence and economic cooperation. In addition, Murdock claims that the nuclear family is universal. ²</p> <p>Some ³ argue that reconstituted families are on the increase ⁴ but these are just a strand of the nuclear family. These result from the breakdown of the nuclear family, consisting of two partners who each had their own children from other instances, joined through marriage and common residence. However, there are many critics of this stance, arguing that this definition is too limiting and excludes many other types of families, including homosexuals and single parent families. ⁵</p> <p>Parsons claims that through the fit thesis, pre-industrial, extended families which are families that have many generations residing together turned nuclear through the process of industrialisation, which is when a society relies on technology for production. Therefore, any industrial society has nuclear families. ⁶ However, opponents of the fit thesis argue that the dominance of the nuclear family never existed, which eliminates the possibility for a society to 'remain' nuclear, as it never was. ⁷ Some argue that instead of extended turning nuclear, it was the other way around. Pre-industrial societies must have been nuclear because high death rates eliminated the chance of grandparents. In addition, these same death rates lead to</p>	<p>¹ It would be good to introduce Murdoch as a functionalist.</p> <p>² This shows good knowledge and understanding.</p> <p>³ It is better to avoid the word 'some' and try to use a specific name or theory.</p> <p>⁴ It would have been good to suggest some reasons why reconstituted families are increasing.</p> <p>⁵ Good explicit evaluation.</p> <p>⁶ Good use of a concept, which has been developed and well explained.</p> <p>⁷ This is also an example of good evaluation. It would have been good if the candidate had also used the work of Laslett or Anderson and / or other historical evidence to criticise Parson's work in a more detailed way.</p>

Learner response	Examiner comments
<p>many reconstituted families. The family had to turn nuclear because of the crowded living space in the city, the result of everyone moving there due to urbanisation. ⁸</p> <p>In continuation, in modern society, there is much more tolerance for diverse families, those that that stray from the norm. ⁹ For example, gay marriage was legalised in the United States in 2015, making the amount of gay families skyrocket. ¹⁰ In addition, more people are getting divorced. One out of every ten ¹¹ marriages end in divorce due to divorce becoming more affordable and acceptable such as the Divorce Reform Act 1971 in the UK which set the standard for 'irretrievable breakdown' of the family. This leads to more lone parent families arising in addition to reconstituted. ¹²</p> <p>The New Right, a right-wing US organisation strongly opposes the breakdown of the family and calls for a managerial state, government intervention in the family. ¹³ They claim that the nuclear family is the best place to socialise children as the mother is always there, unlike dual income or single parent families. ¹⁴</p> <p>Globally however, there are many other types of families. For example, the Israeli Kibbutz practice communal living, gender equality and community child-rearing. Also, the Oneida community in Boston, USA also practices communal living in addition to open relationships with exclusive relationships banned. This community prospered economically but failed to be accepted by society. According to Murdock, these are not a family. ¹⁵</p>	<p>⁸ This sentence needed to be linked to Parson's thesis of fit.</p> <p>⁹ This point could have been developed to discuss the decline in social stigma.</p> <p>¹⁰ This is a good example of how changes in attitudes have been reflected through changing policies leading to changes in ideas about what constitutes a 'normal family'.</p> <p>¹¹ It would have been good to know where divorce rates are on in 10 as divorce rates vary considerably across the world.</p> <p>¹² This is a good, relevant reason for family diversity increasing.</p> <p>¹³ It is a good idea to draw on New Right ideas, it would have been good to mention Murray (1984) and his view that alternatives to the nuclear family lead to 'moral decay' and 'welfare dependency' through a lack of strong male role models.</p> <p>¹⁴ It would have been interesting to add here that feminists such as Stacey claim that increased choice today has led women to be more independent and leave patriarchal relationships. Families of choice within a postmodern society could have been mentioned here as an alternative to traditional ideas about nuclear families being the norm. The word 'matrifocal' single parent family could have been used here.</p> <p>¹⁵ This is good evidence of alternatives to the nuclear family.</p>

Learner response	Examiner comments
<p>A sociological reading 'The Family in Transition' claims that the only time the nuclear family was universal was in the post war period 1940-50. ¹⁶ This period of time was the real abnormality. Before the nuclear family that the media romanticises, infanticide was a common practice for example.</p> <p>¹⁷ Therefore, in conclusion, the nuclear family did not remain the dominant family form for many reasons: it never was the dominant family form, it only dominated during the 1940's and 50's and there are many other family forms to be considered. Only 50 % of the UK is nuclear ¹⁸ and this is hardly 'dominant'. ¹⁹</p>	<p>¹⁶ This is a good point, which shows that family structures change over time. However it should be mentioned that this only applied to industrial societies and be backed up with evidence.</p> <p>¹⁷ This essay has clear structure and is brought to a conclusion at this point.</p> <p>¹⁸ The number of families currently nuclear in the UK is currently 21%. While it is acceptable to make slight inaccuracies, this difference here is quite significant.</p> <p>¹⁹ It may have been useful to consider that alternatives to the nuclear family are growing, e.g. reconstituted families and that as people live longer, they are likely to move through a number of family forms over their life-span.</p>

Summary

This essay gets 17 marks out of 26, it is therefore Level 4.

It provides some good knowledge and understanding of the view that the nuclear family is universal, along with some detailed points, for example about the thesis of fit. There are some well used concepts such as 'thesis of fit' and 'urbanisation'. The ideas of the New Right are referred to as are the functionalist views of Murdock and Parsons. The material selected is usually accurate and relevant, but it is not always applied to the question, for example, the material on the New Right. There is some good evaluation of the view that the nuclear family is universal, but it is not sustained or built up in the form of an argument throughout the essay. Some parts of the essay are descriptive, for example the penultimate paragraph.

To reach the top level, this essay would need to consider a broader range of theoretical views on the universality of the nuclear family (such as feminist or postmodernist views) as well as evaluating a wider range of alternative family types. A top-level essay may have also explored the impact of ethnicity on patterns of family diversity.

General advice

It is always a good idea to read the question carefully, noticing the command words and key instructions. Every single word in the question needs to be thought about before you begin writing. You may want to underline the command words and any other key words in the question to help you think about what they mean. Many candidates jump straight into answering the question only to realise too late that they have not responded directly to the specific demands. Read the question first and pause to think about what you need to find before you start doing any writing – this will help you to choose the correct knowledge and skills so you don't waste time in the examination. Don't forget that any planning notes you make should be left visible, you can gain marks even if you don't get as far as including these ideas fully in your answer.

When answering a short question you do not have to rewrite the question and you should aim to write concisely. If you are answering a short question which is asking you to 'Describe' or 'Explain' two different 'factors' or 'strengths' for example, make sure that you set out the two parts of the question as clearly separate. Leave a line between the two so it is clear where one ends and the other starts.

Make sure that you spell names and concepts correctly, it is important that you try to ensure that your grammar and punctuation are also generally good. Be aware of when sociological concepts, studies and theories emerged, it is important to understand their context. If you are being asked to 'evaluate the view' it is important to use other sociological views to consider how useful the view in the question is.

If you have had a good attempt at a question and still not managed to finish, it is best to move on to another question and come back to it later. This will help you to make good use of the time you have available.

Allow a few minutes at the end of the examination to check your work. This will help you to spot errors in your writing, grammar or punctuation. You can also check that you have not missed any key ideas.

Section 7: Revision

This advice will help you revise and prepare for the examinations. It is divided into general advice and specific advice for each of the papers.

Use the tick boxes to keep a record of what you have done, what you plan to do or what you understand.

General advice

Before the examination

Find out when the examinations are and plan your revision so you have enough time for each topic. A revision timetable will help you. Revising as you learn is a good way to consolidate your learning and helps you manage your revision.

Find out how long each paper is and how many questions you have to answer. Make sure that you plan how long you should spend on each question and practice timing yourself and writing in timed conditions.

Know the meaning of the command words used in questions and how to apply them to the information given. Highlight the command words in past papers and check what they mean.

Make revision notes; try different styles of notes. See the *Learner Guide: Planning, Reflection and Revision* (www.cambridgeinternational.org/images/371937-learner-guide-planning-reflection-and-revision.pdf) which has ideas about note-taking. Discover what works best for you.

Work for short periods then have a break. Revise small sections of the syllabus at a time. Start with the topics you find most challenging.

Build your confidence by practising questions on each of the topics. Edit or re-do work done which you are less happy with so that you increase your confidence.

Make sure you practise lots of past examination questions so that you are familiar with the format of the examination papers. You could time yourself when doing a paper so that you know how quickly you need to work in the real examination.

Look at mark schemes to help you to understand how the marks are awarded for each question.

Focus on learning sociological names with concepts. Ensure that you are aware of the correct definition of concepts and if appropriate, you have examples to show that you understand the concept.

You do not have to learn the dates of theorists ideas or significant texts or research, but it is desirable to, and it helps you to think about the time the assumptions that were common at the time.

During the examination

Read the instructions carefully and answer **all** the required questions. Make it clear which question you are answering. Do not re-write the question, it wastes time.

Check the number of marks for each question or part question. This helps you to judge how long you should be spending on the response. You don't want to spend too long on some questions and then run out of time at the end. Make sure that you do not write too much for short questions.

Do not leave out questions or parts of questions. Remember, no answer means no mark.

You do not have to answer the questions in the order they are printed in the answer booklet. You may be able to do a later question more easily then come back to an earlier one for another try.

Read each question very carefully. Misreading a question can cost you marks:

- Identify the command words – you could underline or highlight them.
- Identify the other key words and underline them too.
- Try to put the question into your own words to understand what it is really asking.

Read all parts of a question before starting your answer. Think carefully about what is needed for each part. You will not need to repeat material.

Answer the specific question in front of you. This is very important!

- Use your knowledge and understanding.
- Make sure that you do not write too much for shorter questions. It is better to think carefully and be concise and clear.
- If you are asked in a short question to 'Describe two...' and you are unsure of one of your answers, leave it and write a third. Don't cross out answers you are less sure of, they may attract a mark.
- Remember to select the most appropriate knowledge for the specific question in front of you.
- Ensure that you apply your knowledge to the question rather than simply assume it is answering the question by being described.
- If it is a longer question remember to ensure that you avoid a 'shopping list' style essay, rather, aim for a discursive style.
- If it is a long essay question, make sure that you use a clear structure, with an introduction, middle and clear conclusion.

Make sure that you have answered everything that a question asks. Sometimes one sentence asks two things, e.g. 'Evaluate the view... and is the main reason...'. It is easy to concentrate on the first request and forget about the second one.

Always make sure that if you have made any brief planning notes, that you leave these without crossing them out. It gives the examiner an idea of what you were thinking, even if you did not quite have time to discuss fully. If you have written something you are not sure about, leave it in.

Use sociological language, particularly concepts in your answers when possible.

During the examination

You can write some notes to help you plan your longer questions, but these should not be too long or time consuming. Do not cross these out but make it clear where the planning ends and the answer begins.

Avoid making errors in answering the wrong question when you are given a choice, read the instructions carefully. For example, if you are asked to answer one question from Section A and one question from Section B.

Make sure that you read through all questions carefully where you are given an option of different questions. There is not an 'easier' question, and shorter questions do not mean easier questions.

Plan how long you should spend on each question and stick to these timings. There are 1.5 minutes per mark, so plan accordingly.

Advice for all papers

When you are preparing for the exams, try to plan revision time according to the marks available.

Be aware of which types of questions or command words that you find most challenging and practice these and get advice from your teachers on how you can improve.

Look closely at the criteria in the mark scheme to ensure you know exactly what the examiner is looking for.

Read the examiner's report for each paper; it contains important information about where learners tend to make common errors as well as giving you ideas about what the exam board judge to be good answers.

If you are taking the two-year course, make sure that you return to first year topics regularly so that you do not forget work.

You can draw upon the key concepts wherever they seem relevant, provided that you can apply them to your question.

It is a good idea to evaluate or judge the methodology of a study if you are using it as evidence to support a particular view.

Do not use concepts or ideas from other topics if they are appropriate, making sure you do not drift from the specific demands of the question.

In longer answers, make sure that you consider a range of views and try to establish which view is most useful.

Avoid including your own ideas and views, you are meant to be discussing the views and ideas of sociologists.

Advice for Paper 1

This paper is worth 60 marks and you have 1 hour and 30 minutes. This means 1.5 minutes per mark.

There are two sections: you should spend 50 minutes on Section A, it is worth 34 marks.

You should spend 40 minutes answering Section B, which consists of one essay question worth 26 marks.

If you are asked to 'Describe two...' of anything make sure that you pick two definitely different points before you begin, so that your answers do not overlap.

Set out your two-part answer clearly, with a line between each part.

For question 2(a) and (b) make sure that you provide a balanced answer, for example if you are asked to explain one strength and one limitation of a method, make sure that you address both equally.

Where you are expected to explain a view, make sure you provide the general view followed by a more detailed explanation. Ensure that you identify key thinkers and key sociological concepts as part of your response.

If you are asked to give an argument against a view, make sure that it is clearly an argument rather than simply describing another view.

If you are asked to evaluate a view it means that you should explain the main view and then use other views to challenge or support, it.

Advice for Paper 2

This paper is the same structure as Paper 1. It is worth 60 marks and you have 1 hour and 30 minutes. This means 1.5 minutes per mark.

You should spend 50 minutes on Section A. You should spend 40 minutes on Section B: one essay (26 marks) from a choice of two.

Similar advice to Paper 1 applies. Be aware that you may get a question which asks you to explain limitations of a particular theory or view. If this is the case, make sure you do not simply outline the view but actually specifically provide a problem or a criticism of the theory.

Where you are answering a longer question (8 or 10 marks or more) write in continuous prose and make sure you use sociological evidence and language to back up your points.

If you are asked to explain a view make sure you include what type of view it is and provide a sense of when it emerged. This may include some of the assumptions that the view makes.

For the essays in section B make sure you read every word of the question carefully and address all parts of the question in your answer.

For the essays try to build an argument so that your answer includes a range of views.

You may wish to apply a range of cross-cultural examples, make sure you are clear about where the example you are describing is from. It is also worth thinking about how families have changed over time.

If you are going to refer to a social policy make sure it is accurately described as possible. A date is also desirable.

Advice for Paper 3

This paper is 1 hour and 15 minutes long. It is worth 50 marks. You have 1.5 minutes per mark

You will have 4 compulsory questions. You should spend 35 minutes on the shorter questions and 40 minutes on the longer 26-mark essay

If a question is about a particular social group, e.g. boys, make sure your answer is focused on boys and not girls. Likewise, if the question asks you about gender, make sure you discuss both girls and boys.

Be careful not to make assumptions or generalisations. For example, while some groups do less well than others in terms of educational outcomes, it does not mean you can say that all of the pupils from those underperforming groups will underperform. It is better to say, for example, 'some boys underperform compared with some girls.'

Remember that gender, class and ethnicity overlap, leading to some learners doing much better or worse. For example, a middle-class girl is much more likely to do well in education than a working-class boy. This is known as intersectionality.

Don't forget that where appropriate you can mention the methodology of a research on education. You can also make links to the key concepts of the course and other topics if appropriate.

If you get a question on the role of education, you are expected to consider the functions of education, from different perspectives.

If you are using a social policy make sure it is accurately described as possible and also make sure that if you can, add a date.

Advice for Paper 4

Paper 4 is 1 hour 45 minutes and is worth 70 marks. You are expected to pick two questions to answer from a choice of six.

There are two questions, worth 35 marks each, which you must select from different topics.

Try to spend the same time on each question, 50 minutes each. Read the question carefully, look at each word and make sure you are aware what the question is asking you. Plan each question briefly before you begin.

Apply your knowledge to the question: there is a danger that you write a 'shopping list essay' where you simply describe all you know about a topic. Instead link every point to the question with statements such as 'this suggests that...' Another tip is to make sure you reuse words or phrases from the question in every paragraph.

Re-read your essays when you have finished. Make sure you have unpacked or explained all concepts. Make sure your expression is clear and your grammar and spelling is accurate.

Do draw on research methodology, key concepts and any contemporary issues you think are important or relevant, making sure you apply these to the specific question.

Revision checklists

In the next part of this guide we have provided some revision checklists. These include information from the syllabus that you should revise. They don't contain all the detailed knowledge you need to know, just an overview. For more detail see the syllabus and talk to your teacher.

The table headings are explained below:

Topic	You should be able to answer the following questions	R	A	G	Comments
These are the topics in the syllabus	This is what you should be able to do or know for each part of the syllabus	<p>You can use the tick boxes to show when you have revised an item and how confident you feel about it.</p> <p>R = RED means you are unsure and lack confidence; you might want to focus your revision here and possibly talk to your teacher for help</p> <p>A = AMBER means you are reasonably confident but need some extra practice</p> <p>G = GREEN means you are very confident.</p> <p>As your revision progresses, you can concentrate on the RED and AMBER items in order to turn them into GREEN items. You might find it helpful to highlight each topic in red, orange or green to help you prioritise.</p>			<p>You can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • add further information of your own, such as names of case studies needed. • add learning aids, such as rhymes, poems or word play. • pinpoint areas of difficulty you need to check further with your teacher or textbooks. • include reference to a useful resource.

Paper 1 – Socialisation, identity and methods of research

Topic	You should be able to answer the following questions	R	A	G	Comments
Socialisation and the creation of social identity	What is socialisation and how is social identity created?				
	How do we define the following: culture, roles, norms, values, beliefs, customs, ideology, power and status, social construction? Can you provide examples of each?				
	What is the importance of socialisation in influencing human behaviour. Is it nature or nurture which determines human behaviour?				
	How do agencies of social control, including family, education, peer group, media and religion shape our socialisation?				
	How is social Control experienced and how do people conform to and resist it?				
	What is the role of structure and agency in shaping the relationship between the individual and society? What are the differences between structuralist and interactionist views?				
	Which factors explain why individuals conform to social expectations, including sanctions, social pressure, self-interest and social exchange?				
	What are the mechanisms through which order is maintained, including power, ideology, force and consensus?				
	How do sociologists explain deviance and non-conformity, including subcultures, under-socialisation, marginalisation, cultural deprivation and social resistance?				
	How is social identity and linked to changes in society?				

Topic	You should be able to answer the following questions	R	A	G	Comments
	To what extent are social class, gender, ethnicity and age elements in the construction of social identity?				
	How might social class, gender, ethnicity and age identities be changing due to globalisation, increased choice and the creation of new / hybrid identities?				
Methods of research	What are the main methods of research?				
	What are the different types of data and how is research designed?				
	What are the differences between primary and secondary sources of data and also between quantitative and qualitative data?				
	What are the strengths and limitations of different secondary sources of data, including official statistics, personal documents, digital content and media sources?				
	What are the strengths and limitations of different quantitative research methods, including questionnaires, structured interviews, experiments and content analysis?				
	What are the strengths and limitations of different qualitative research methods, including overt and covert participant and non-participant observation, unstructured interviews, semi-structured interviews and group interviews?				
	What are the key stages of research design, including deciding on research strategy, formulating research questions and hypotheses, sampling frames, sampling techniques, pilot studies, operationalisation, conducting research and interpreting results?				

Topic	You should be able to answer the following questions	R	A	G	Comments
	What are the key approaches to sociological research?				
	How do sociologists use approaches drawing on different research methods, including case studies, social surveys, ethnography and longitudinal studies?				
	What is the mixed methods approach to research, including triangulation and methodological pluralism?				
	What is the positivist approach, and the scientific method? What is meant by objectivity, reliability and value-freedom?				
	What is the interpretivist approach, and what is meant by verstehen, meaning, subjectivity and validity?				
	What are the debates about whether sociology can / should be based on the methods and procedures of the natural sciences and the role of values in sociological research?				
	What are the main issues with research?				
	How important are the theoretical, practical and ethical considerations influencing the choice of topic, choice of method(s) and conduct of research?				
	How might research findings be biased by the actions and values of the sociologist? And how might choices in research be affected by funding, designing and conducting the research?				
	How are validity, reliability, objectivity, representativeness and ethics important as concepts in assessing the value of different research methods?				

Paper 2 – The Family

Topic	You should be able to answer the following questions	R	A	G	Comments
Theories of family and social change	What are the main theories of the family?				
	What are sociological perspectives on the role of the family?				
	How do functionalist accounts of how the family claim that it benefits its members and society and how have the functions of families have changed over time, including the 'loss of functions' debate?				
	How do Marxist accounts of the family argue that the nuclear family benefits capitalism, including ideological control, reproduction of labour and consumption?				
	What are feminist responses to functionalist and Marxist accounts of the role of the family?				
	What is family diversity in the context of social change?				
	What are the causes and consequences of changing patterns of marriage, cohabitation, divorce and separation?				
	What are the different family and household forms, including nuclear, extended, lone-parent, reconstituted, same-sex families, families of choice and single-person households?				
	What are the dimensions of family diversity, including organisational, cultural and class diversity?				
	What is the extent of family diversity and to what extent is the nuclear family still dominant?				

Topic	You should be able to answer the following questions	R	A	G	Comments
	What are the New Right and postmodernist perspectives on family diversity?				
	How does the state and social policy influence the family?				
Family roles and changing relationships	How are roles within the family and relationships changing?				
	To what extent is there gender equality in the family? How does gender affect a person's experience of family life?				
	What are the different feminist perspectives on equality and power in the family, including liberal, radical and Marxist feminist?				
	How are conjugal roles managed and to what extent does gender equality occur in the family, including housework, childcare, power and emotion?				
	Is the experience of family life positive or negative for family members?				
	How does age affect family life?				
	How is childhood socially constructed?				
	What are the changes in the role and social position of children in the family?				
	What is the role and social position of grandparents in the family, including cross-cultural comparisons and the impact of changing life expectancy upon the family?				

Topic	You should be able to answer the following questions	R	A	G	Comments
	How do social class, gender and ethnicity affect the experiences of children in the family?				
	How have the concepts of motherhood and fatherhood changed?				

Paper 3 – Education

Topic	You should be able to answer the following questions	R	A	G	Comments
Education and society	What is the relationship between education and society?				
	What are the main theories about the role of education?				
	What are the functionalist views about how education contributes to value consensus and social solidarity?				
	How does education lead to role allocation?				
	What are Marxist views about how education contributes to the maintenance of the capitalist economic system?				
	How is education used as an instrument of ideological control and cultural reproduction?				
	What are the New Right and social democratic views on the relationship between education and the economy?				
	How is education linked to social mobility?				
	How is equal opportunity linked to the idea of meritocracy?				
	To what extent are education systems meritocratic today?				
	In which ways is education important in influencing life chances?				
	What are the consequences of educational underachievement for the individual and for society?				

Topic	You should be able to answer the following questions	R	A	G	Comments
	What evidence and arguments link education and social mobility?				
	What influences the curriculum?				
	How is knowledge socially constructed?				
	What are the factors influencing the content of the curriculum, including power, status, culture, economic demands, and gender?				
	What is meant by education and cultural reproduction, including the ethnocentric curriculum, the gendered curriculum, and the hidden curriculum?				
	How is the curriculum linked to the concept of cultural capital?				
Education and inequality	What is the relationship between education and inequality?				
	What is the connection between intelligence and educational attainment?				
	What are the difficulties in defining intelligence?				
	What are IQ tests and to what extent are they influenced by social factors?				
	To what extent does intelligence influence educational attainment?				
	What is the relationship between social class and educational attainment?				

Topic	You should be able to answer the following questions	R	A	G	Comments
	What is the relationship between material factors and educational attainment?				
	How useful are cultural explanations for patterns in social class and educational attainment, including parental attitudes, values, speech codes, and cultural capital?				
	To what extent are in-school factors, including labelling, ability grouping and pupil subcultures useful?				
	What are compensatory education programmes? To what extent are they effective?				
	What is the relationship between ethnicity and educational attainment?				
	What evidence is there to suggest there is racism in schools?				
	What are the cultural explanations for patterns in ethnicity and educational attainment?				
	To what extent are subcultures useful as a way of understanding the relationship between ethnicity and educational attainment?				
	What is the relationship between ethnicity, social class and gender?				
	What is the relationship between gender and educational attainment?				
	What is the relationship between gender socialisation and educational attainment?				

Topic	You should be able to answer the following questions	R	A	G	Comments
	How have wider social changes affected gendered educational achievement, including changing female expectations and the crisis of masculinity?				
	What is the relationship between gender and subcultures?				
	To what extent do teacher expectations and gendered behaviour in the classroom affect the relationship between gender and education?				

Paper 4 – Globalisation, Media and Religion

Topic	You should be able to answer the following questions	R	A	G	Comments
Key debates, concepts and perspectives	What are the main perspectives on globalisation?				
	What are the key definitions and issues, including globalisation, glocalisation, global culture?				
	What are the problems with defining globalisation?				
	What are the different dimensions of globalisation including cultural, political and economic?				
	What are the different perspectives on who benefits from globalisation, including the Marxist, feminist, postmodernist, globalist, sceptic and transformationalist perspectives?				
	How are globalisation and identity linked?				
	What is the impact of globalisation on identity, including ethnic revitalisation, cultural defence and hybrid identity?				
	What is the debate between cultural divergence and cultural convergence / homogenisation?				
	What is the role of Western ideology in shaping identity and the concept of Westernisation?				
	How are globalisation, power and politics linked?				
	How has globalisation lead to the spread of liberal democracy and human rights?				

Topic	You should be able to answer the following questions	R	A	G	Comments
	How have global social movements and other attempts opposed globalisation?				
	What is the role of the nation state in tackling global social and environmental problems?				
Contemporary issues	How is globalisation linked to poverty and inequalities?				
	What are the debates about the impact of globalisation on life chances in developing countries, in relation to education, income and health?				
	What is the role of transnational organisations in tackling global inequalities and to what extent have they been successful?				
	What are the sociological explanations for global inequalities, including capitalism, colonialism, post-colonialism and patriarchy?				
	What is the effect of globalisation and migration?				
	What are the causes of global migration, including immigration, emigration, net migration, push and pull factors, global labour patterns and tourism?				
	What are the consequences of global migration, positive and negative, including cultural diversity, economic benefits, concerns over scarce resources and negative perceptions of migration?				
	Who benefits from migration?				

Topic	You should be able to answer the following questions	R	A	G	Comments
	What is the relationship between globalisation and crime?				
	What are the reasons for the emergence of global crimes, such as human trafficking, corporate crime and crimes against the environment?				
	What are the key explanations of who benefits from global crime, including Marxist and feminist perspectives?				
	How are global crimes affecting the policing and prosecution of global crime?				
	What are the benefits and challenges resulting from globalisation and new technology?				
Ownership and control of the media	Who has ownership and control of media?				
	What is the traditional media and the new media?				
	What are the trends affecting the organisation of the media, including cross-media ownership, digitalisation, media conglomerates and social media?				
	Who controls the media?				
	What are the differences between the traditional media and the new media?				
	To what extent has traditional media been undermined by the growth of the new media?				

Topic	You should be able to answer the following questions	R	A	G	Comments
	What are the key theories of the media and what are the key influences on media content?				
	What are the pluralist theories of the media?				
	What are the Marxist and neo-Marxist theories of the media?				
	Which factors influence the selection and presentation of news?				
	How are concepts of mass manipulation and hegemony useful as different ways of understanding the production of media content?				
	What is the postmodernist contribution to understanding the media?				
	How is censorship a factor influencing media content?				
	How may the media influence the political process, including agenda setting, opinion polls, and news reporting? What is the impact of the new media?				
	How are the new media contributing to globalisation?				
	To what extent does the new media challenge existing power structures?				
	What is the debate about digital optimism versus digital pessimism?				
	What is the impact of the new media on social identities and interpersonal relationships?				

Topic	You should be able to answer the following questions	R	A	G	Comments
Media representation and effects	What is meant by media representation and effects?				
	How does the media represent class, gender, ethnicity, and age groups?				
	How are different groups represented in the media?				
	How does the media contribute to gender socialisation?				
	What are moral panics around issues such as class, gender, ethnicity and age groups?				
	What is the relationship between the media and popular culture?				
	What are the different models of media effects?				
	What are the direct effects models of media influence, including the hypodermic syringe model?				
	What are the indirect effects models of media influence, including the uses and gratification model, the two-step flow model, the normative model and the cultural effects model?				
	What are the strengths and limitations of the different models of media effects?				
	What are the arguments and evidence about the extent to which human behaviour is influenced by the media?				
	What is the impact of the media on behaviour?				

Topic	You should be able to answer the following questions	R	A	G	Comments
	What are the arguments and evidence about the extent to which violent media leads to violent behaviour?				
	What is the impact of the media on crime, including deviance amplification and moral panics?				
	What are the ways in which the media might have a positive impact on human behaviour?				
	What are the ways in which people may be affected by media sensationalism and stereotyping?				
Religion and social order	What is the relationship between religion and social order?				
	What are the different ways of defining religion?				
	What are the difficulties in measuring religious belief?				
	What are the patterns and explanations for religiosity among different social groups including class, gender, ethnicity and age?				
	What is the relationship between religion and other belief systems?				
	What are the functionalist accounts of how religion contributes to social order and social solidarity?				
	What are the Marxist accounts of the relationship between religion, oppression and capitalism?				

Topic	You should be able to answer the following questions	R	A	G	Comments
	What are the strengths and limitations of functionalist and Marxist perspectives on religion?				
	To what extent is religion a source of social change?				
	What is Weber's theory of the role of religion in the rise of capitalism?				
	What are the alternative views about the relationship between religion and the origins of capitalism?				
	How is liberation theology an example of religion acting as a vehicle for social change?				
	What is the influence of religious movements on political debates and struggles, examined through case studies such as the Evangelical movement in US politics or the influence of the Ayatollahs in the Iranian revolution?				
The influence of religion	What is the influence of religion?				
	What is the secularisation thesis?				
	What evidence is there for a decline in religious belief?				
	To what extent is rationalisation leading to a decline in religious belief?				
	To what extent has religion has lost its social significance?				
	What is the relationship between gender, feminism and religion				

Topic	You should be able to answer the following questions	R	A	G	Comments
	What are the feminist perspectives on religion?				
	What are the main explanations for patriarchy and gender inequality in religion?				
	What are the moves towards gender equality in religious organisations and what evidence is there that religious practices may benefit women?				
	Has there been a growth in privatised religion?				
	What is the concept of spiritual shopping and how does this contribute to our understanding religiosity today?				
	Is resacrilisation is a feature of post-modernity?				
	What is the significance of new religious movements (NRMs) and New Age ideas for understanding the meaning and significance of religion today?				
	What are the different explanations for the growth in fundamentalist religions, including cultural defence, cultural transition, disengagement, marginality, and religious revival?				

Section 8: Useful websites

The websites listed below are useful resources to help you study for your Cambridge International AS & A Level Sociology.

Poverty related resources

www.irp.wisc.edu/resources/

Global social change research project: understanding the world today

<http://gsociology.icaap.org/>

World Bank – information on data from around the world

www.worldbank.org/

Why We Post – an excellent interactive research based website exploring the impact of social media in 9 different sites across the world. Free downloadable YouTube clips, books and resources

www.ucl.ac.uk/why-we-post

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