



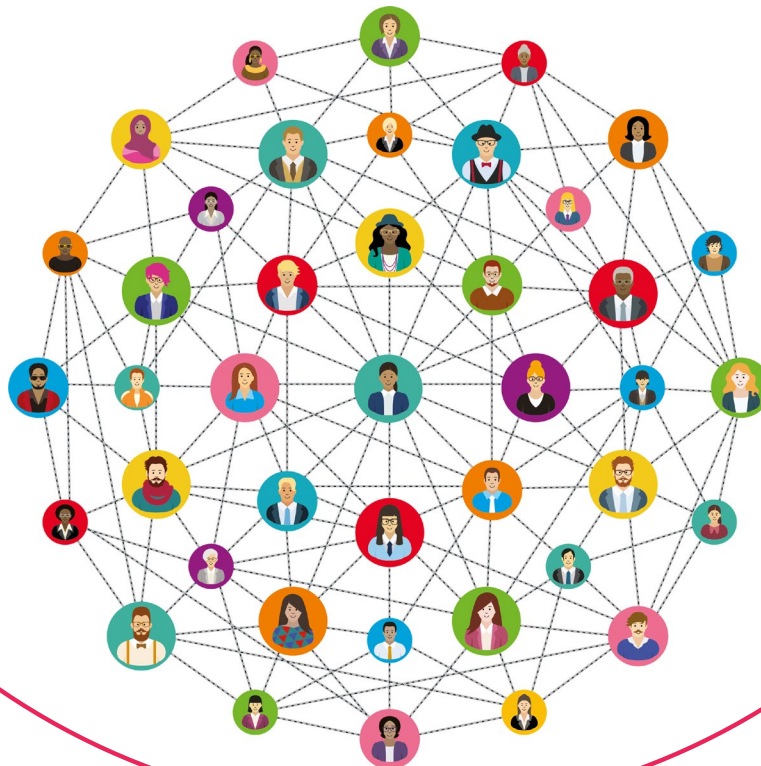
Syllabus

Cambridge International AS & A Level Sociology 9699

Use this syllabus for exams in 2024, 2025 and 2026.

Exams are available in the June and November series.

Also available for examination in March 2024, 2025 and 2026 for India only.



Why choose Cambridge International?

Cambridge International prepares school students for life, helping them develop an informed curiosity and a lasting passion for learning. We are part of the University of Cambridge.

Our Cambridge Pathway gives students a clear path for educational success from age 5 to 19. Schools can shape the curriculum around how they want students to learn – with a wide range of subjects and flexible ways to offer them. It helps students discover new abilities and a wider world, and gives them the skills they need for life, so they can achieve at school, university and work.

Our programmes and qualifications set the global standard for international education. They are created by subject experts, rooted in academic rigour and reflect the latest educational research. They provide a strong platform for students to progress from one stage to the next, and are well supported by teaching and learning resources.

We review all our syllabuses regularly, so they reflect the latest research evidence and professional teaching practice – and take account of the different national contexts in which they are taught.

We consult with teachers to help us design each syllabus around the needs of their learners. Consulting with leading universities has helped us make sure our syllabuses encourage students to master the key concepts in the subject and develop the skills necessary for success in higher education.

Our mission is to provide educational benefit through provision of international programmes and qualifications for school education and to be the world leader in this field. Together with schools, we develop Cambridge learners who are confident, responsible, reflective, innovative and engaged – equipped for success in the modern world.

Every year, nearly a million Cambridge students from 10 000 schools in 160 countries prepare for their future with the Cambridge Pathway.

School feedback: ‘We think the Cambridge curriculum is superb preparation for university.’

Feedback from: Christoph Guttentag, Dean of Undergraduate Admissions, Duke University, USA

Quality management



Cambridge International is committed to providing exceptional quality. In line with this commitment, our quality management system for the provision of international qualifications and education programmes for students aged 5 to 19 is independently certified as meeting the internationally recognised standard, ISO 9001:2015. Learn more at www.cambridgeinternational.org/ISO9001

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Important: Changes to this syllabus

For information about changes to this syllabus for 2024, 2025 and 2026, go to page 34.

The latest syllabus is version 1, published September 2021. There are no significant changes which affect teaching.

Any textbooks endorsed to support the syllabus for examination from 2021 are still suitable for use with this syllabus.

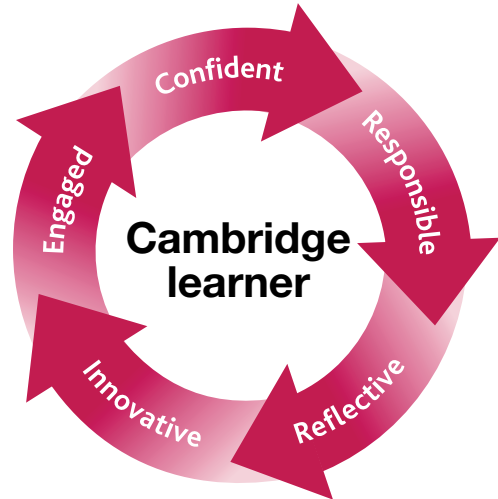
1 Why choose this syllabus?

Key benefits

The best motivation for a student is a real passion for the subject they're learning. By offering students a variety of Cambridge International AS & A Levels, you can give them the greatest chance of finding the path of education they most want to follow. With over 50 subjects to choose from, students can select the ones they love and that they're best at, which helps motivate them throughout their studies.

Following a Cambridge International AS & A Level programme helps students develop abilities which universities value highly, including:

- a deep understanding of their subjects
- higher order thinking skills – analysis, critical thinking, problem solving
- presenting ordered and coherent arguments
- independent learning and research.



Cambridge International AS & A Level Sociology encourages learners to think sociologically about contemporary social, cultural and political issues. The syllabus provides opportunities to explore key concepts and debates that underpin the discipline of sociology and to develop the skills of interpretation, application, analysis and evaluation while studying a range of stimulating topics and real-world issues.

Our approach in Cambridge International AS & A Level Sociology encourages learners to be:

confident, communicating sociological ideas and arguments to others, and exploring contemporary social issues with maturity and insight

responsible, recognising the importance of culture and community and able to appreciate cultural differences and alternative perspectives on social issues

reflective, reviewing and refining their skills of analysis and evaluation and drawing connections between specific examples and wider issues

innovative, developing informed views about real-world issues, and an ability to think sociologically to understand problems and respond to questions

engaged, learning through independent study and collaboration; debating issues and using research findings to tackle sociological questions.

School feedback: 'Cambridge students develop a deep understanding of subjects and independent thinking skills.'

Feedback from: Principal, Rockledge High School, USA

Key concepts

Key concepts are essential ideas that help students develop a deep understanding of their subject and make links between different aspects. Key concepts may open up new ways of thinking about, understanding or interpreting the important things to be learned.

Good teaching and learning will incorporate and reinforce a subject's key concepts to help students gain:

- a greater depth as well as breadth of subject knowledge
- confidence, especially in applying knowledge and skills in new situations
- the vocabulary to discuss their subject conceptually and show how different aspects link together
- a level of mastery of their subject to help them enter higher education.

The key concepts identified below, carefully introduced and developed, will help to underpin the course you will teach. You may identify additional key concepts which will also enrich teaching and learning.

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 and 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 'post-modernity' 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 contemporary 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.

International recognition and acceptance

Our expertise in curriculum, teaching and learning, and assessment is the basis for the recognition of our programmes and qualifications around the world. Every year thousands of students with Cambridge International AS & A Levels gain places at leading universities worldwide. Our programmes and qualifications are valued by top universities around the world including those in the UK, US (including Ivy League universities), Europe, Australia, Canada and New Zealand.

UK NARIC, the national agency in the UK for the recognition and comparison of international qualifications and skills, has carried out an independent benchmarking study of Cambridge International AS & A Level and found it to be comparable to the standard of AS & A Level in the UK. This means students can be confident that their Cambridge International AS & A Level qualifications are accepted as equivalent, grade for grade, to UK AS & A Levels by leading universities worldwide.

Cambridge International AS Level Sociology makes up the first half of the Cambridge International A Level course in sociology and provides a foundation for the study of sociology at Cambridge International A Level. Depending on local university entrance requirements, students may be able to use it to progress directly to university courses in sociology or some other subjects. It is also suitable as part of a course of general education.

Cambridge International A Level Sociology provides a foundation for the study of sociology or related courses in higher education. Equally it is suitable as part of a course of general education.

For more information about the relationship between the Cambridge International AS Level and Cambridge International A Level see the 'Assessment overview' section of the Syllabus overview.

We recommend learners check the Cambridge recognition database and university websites to find the most up-to-date entry requirements for courses they wish to study.

Learn more at www.cambridgeinternational.org/recognition

School feedback: 'The depth of knowledge displayed by the best A Level students makes them prime targets for America's Ivy League universities.'

Feedback from: Yale University, USA

Supporting teachers

We provide a wide range of resources, detailed guidance and innovative training and professional development so that you can give your students the best possible preparation for Cambridge International AS & A Level. To find out which resources are available for each syllabus go to www.cambridgeinternational.org/support

The School Support Hub is our secure online site for Cambridge teachers where you can find the resources you need to deliver our programmes. You can also keep up to date with your subject and the global Cambridge community through our online discussion forums.

Find out more at www.cambridgeinternational.org/support

Support for Cambridge International AS & A Level			
Planning and preparation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Next steps guides. • Schemes of work. • Specimen papers. • Syllabuses. • Teacher guides. 	Teaching and assessment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Endorsed resources. • Online forums. • Support for coursework and speaking tests. 	Learning and revision <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Example candidate responses. • Past papers and mark schemes. • Specimen paper answers. 	Results <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Candidate Results Service. • Principal examiner reports for teachers. • Results Analysis.

Sign up for email notifications about changes to syllabuses, including new and revised products and services at www.cambridgeinternational.org/syllabusupdates

Professional development

We support teachers through:

- Introductory Training – face-to-face or online
- Extension Training – face-to-face or online
- Enrichment Professional Development – face-to-face or online

Find out more at www.cambridgeinternational.org/events

- Cambridge Professional Development Qualifications

Find out more at www.cambridgeinternational.org/profdev



Supporting exams officers

We provide comprehensive support and guidance for all Cambridge exams officers.

Find out more at: www.cambridgeinternational.org/eoguide

2 Syllabus overview

Aims

The aims describe the purposes of a course based on this syllabus.

The aims are to enable students to develop:

- knowledge and understanding of sociological terms, theories, methods and research findings
- an awareness of the range and limitations of sociological theory and the ability to compare and contrast different theoretical perspectives
- an appreciation and understanding of individual, social and cultural diversity, and of continuity and change in social life
- an understanding of sociological research methods, including issues concerned with the planning, implementation and evaluation of research enquiry and the collection, analysis and interpretation of data
- improved skills of communication, interpretation, analysis and evaluation
- skills for further study.



Cambridge Assessment International Education is an education organisation and politically neutral. The contents of this syllabus, examination papers and associated materials do not endorse any political view. We endeavour to treat all aspects of the exam process neutrally.

Content overview

This table gives an overview of the syllabus content for Cambridge International AS & A Level Sociology.

Paper 1 – Socialisation, identity and methods of research

Socialisation and the creation of social identity	<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

Paper 2 – The Family

Theories of the family and social change	<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

Paper 3 – Education

Education and society	<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

Paper 4 – Globalisation, Media and Religion

Globalisation

Key debates, concepts and perspectives

- Perspectives on globalisation
- Globalisation and identity
- Globalisation, power and politics

Contemporary issues

- Globalisation, poverty and inequalities
- Globalisation and migration
- Globalisation and crime

Media

Ownership and control of the media

- Traditional media and the new media
- Theories of the media and influences on media content
- The impact of the new media

Media representation and effects

- Media representations of class, gender, ethnicity, and age groups
- Different models of media effects
- The impact of the media on behaviour

Religion

Religion and social order

- Religion and society
- Religion and social order
- Religion as a source of social change

The influence of religion

- The secularisation debate
- Gender, feminism and religion
- Religion and post-modernity

School feedback: ‘Cambridge International AS & A Levels prepare students well for university because they’ve learnt to go into a subject in considerable depth. There’s that ability to really understand the depth and richness and the detail of a subject. It’s a wonderful preparation for what they are going to face at university.’

Feedback from: US Higher Education Advisory Council

Assessment overview

Paper 1

Socialisation, identity and methods of research 1 hour 30 minutes

60 marks

Candidates answer four questions.

Section A: three compulsory questions

Section B: one essay (26 marks) from a choice of two

Externally assessed

50% of the AS Level

25% of the A Level

Paper 3

Education 1 hour 15 minutes

50 marks

Candidates answer four compulsory questions.

Question 4 is an essay (26 marks).

Externally assessed

20% of the A Level

Paper 2

The Family 1 hour 30 minutes

60 marks

Candidates answer four questions.

Section A: three compulsory questions

Section B: one essay (26 marks) from a choice of two

Externally assessed

50% of the AS Level

25% of the A Level

Paper 4

Globalisation, Media and Religion 1 hour 45 minutes

70 marks

Candidates answer two essay questions (35 marks each).

Section A: Globalisation

Section B: Media

Section C: Religion

Each section has two essay questions.

Candidates select one question from two different sections.

Externally assessed

30% of the A Level

Information on availability is in the **Before you start** section.

There are three routes for Cambridge International AS & A Level [Subject]:

Route	Paper 1	Paper 2	Paper 3	Paper 4
1 AS Level only (Candidates take all AS components in the same exam series)	yes	yes	no	no
2 A Level (staged over two years) Year 1 AS Level*	yes	yes	no	no
Year 2 Complete the A Level	no	no	yes	yes
3 A Level (Candidates take all components in the same exam series)	yes	yes	yes	yes

* Candidates carry forward their AS Level result subject to the rules and time limits described in the *Cambridge Handbook*. See **Making entries** for more information on carry forward of results [and marks].

Candidates following an AS Level route are eligible for grades a–e. Candidates following an A Level route are eligible for grades A*–E.

Assessment objectives

The assessment objectives (AOs) are:

AO1 Knowledge and understanding

Demonstrating knowledge and understanding of:

- 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:

- 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

Analysing and evaluating sociological theories, evidence, views, research methods, and arguments. This includes:

- 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.

Weighting for assessment objectives

The approximate weightings allocated to each of the assessment objectives (AOs) are summarised below.

Assessment objectives as a percentage of each qualification

Assessment objective	Weighting in AS Level %	Weighting in A Level %
AO1 Knowledge and understanding	40	35
AO2 Interpretation and application	30	30
AO3 Analysis and evaluation	30	35
Total	100	100

Assessment objectives as a percentage of each component

Assessment objective	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

3 Subject content

This syllabus gives you the flexibility to design a course that will interest, challenge and engage your learners. Where appropriate you are responsible for selecting resources and examples to support your learners' study. These should be appropriate for the learners' age, cultural background and learning context as well as complying with your school policies and local legal requirements.

Candidates for Cambridge International AS Level should study the AS Level content for Paper 1 and Paper 2.

Candidates for Cambridge A Level should study all the syllabus content for Paper 1, Paper 2, Paper 3 and at least two of the three topic areas for Paper 4.

The content for each component is detailed below.

AS Level

Paper 1 – Socialisation, identity and methods of research

Paper 2 – The Family

A Level

Paper 3 – Education

Paper 4 – Globalisation

Paper 4 – Media

Paper 4 – Religion

Paper 1 – Socialisation, identity and methods of research

This topic area has two central aims: first, to examine the role of socialisation in the creation of social identities; second, to introduce the basic methods of research, including concepts that can be used to evaluate the relevance and accuracy of sociological findings.

1 Socialisation and the creation of social identity

Candidates will explore the relationship between the individual and society, and how social order is maintained and resisted, drawing on the key concepts of *Socialisation, culture and identity* and *Power, control and resistance*. Candidates will consider contrasting views of the relationship between the individual and society, and changes in social identity, which can be linked to the key concepts of *Structure and human agency* and *Social change and development*.

1.1 The process of learning and socialisation

- Culture, roles, norms, values, beliefs, customs, ideology, power and status as elements in the social construction of reality.
- The importance of socialisation in influencing human behaviour, including the nurture versus nature debate.
- Agencies of socialisation and social control, including family, education, peer group, media and religion.

1.2 Social control, conformity and resistance

- The role of structure and agency in shaping the relationship between the individual and society, including an awareness of the differences between structuralist and interactionist views.
- Factors explaining why individuals conform to social expectations, including sanctions, social pressure, self-interest and social exchange.
- The mechanisms through which order is maintained, including power, ideology, force and consensus.
- How sociologists explain deviance and non-conformity, including subcultures, under-socialisation, marginalisation, cultural deprivation and social resistance.

1.3 Social identity and change

- Social class, gender, ethnicity and age as elements in the construction of social identity.
- How social class, gender, ethnicity and age identities may be changing due to globalisation, increased choice and the creation of new/hybrid identities.

2 Methods of research

Candidates will examine the different research methods and types of data used in sociological research, exploring the strengths and limitations of these. They will look at the process of designing research, and at key ideas for assessing the value of different research methods. Candidates will examine questions such as whether sociology can and should be based on the natural sciences.

2.1 Types of data, methods and research design

- The differences between primary and secondary sources of data and between quantitative and qualitative data.
- The strengths and limitations of different secondary sources of data, including official statistics, personal documents, digital content and media sources.
- The strengths and limitations of different quantitative research methods, including questionnaires, structured interviews, experiments and content analysis.
- 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.
- 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.

2.2 Approaches to sociological research

- The use of approaches drawing on different research methods, including case studies, social surveys, ethnography and longitudinal studies.
- The mixed methods approach to research, including triangulation and methodological pluralism.
- The positivist approach, with reference to scientific method, objectivity, reliability and value-freedom.
- The interpretivist approach, with reference to verstehen, meaning, subjectivity and validity.
- 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.

2.3 Research issues

- The theoretical, practical and ethical considerations influencing the choice of topic, choice of method(s) and conduct of research.
- How research findings may be biased by the actions and values of the sociologist and by choices made in funding, designing and conducting the research.
- Validity, reliability, objectivity, representativeness and ethics as important concepts in assessing the value of different research methods.

Paper 2 – The Family

This topic area develops candidates' understanding of the family in a social context. The aim is to explore different sociological perspectives on the role of the family and family diversity, and to understand the way social change influences family life and different family members.

3 Theories of the family and social change

Candidates will explore different perspectives of the role of the family in society, giving an opportunity for them to reflect on the key concepts of *Power, control and resistance*, and *Socialisation, culture and identity*. Candidates will examine the effects of social change on the diversity of family and household forms, which link to the key concept of *Social change and development*.

3.1 Perspectives on the role of the family

- Functionalist accounts of how the family benefits its members and society and how the functions of families have changed over time, including the 'loss of functions' debate.
- Marxist accounts of how the family benefits capitalism, including ideological control, reproduction of labour and consumption.
- Feminist responses to functionalist and Marxist accounts of the role of the family.

3.2 Diversity and social change

- The causes and consequences of changing patterns of marriage, cohabitation, divorce and separation.
- Different family and household forms, including nuclear, extended, lone-parent, reconstituted, same-sex families, families of choice and single-person households.
- Dimensions of family diversity, including organisational, cultural and class diversity.
- The debate about the extent of family diversity and the dominance of the nuclear family.
- New Right and postmodernist perspectives on family diversity.
- The state and social policy as influences on the family.

4 Family roles and changing relationships

Candidates will consider different ways in which the behaviours of some family members are controlled by others, and will examine equality in the family. These issues provide a context for the key concepts of *Power, control and resistance*, and *Inequality and opportunity*.

4.1 Gender equality and experiences of family life

- Different feminist perspectives on equality and power in the family, including liberal, radical and Marxist feminist.
- Conjugal roles and debates about gender equality in the family, including housework, childcare, power and emotion work.
- Debates about whether the experience of family life is positive or negative for family members.

4.2 Age and family life

- The social construction of childhood, and changes in the role and social position of children in the family.
- The role and social position of grandparents in the family, including cross-cultural comparisons and the impact of changing life expectancy upon the family.
- Social class, gender and ethnicity as factors affecting the experiences of children in the family.
- Changes in the concepts of motherhood and fatherhood.

Paper 3 – Education

In this topic area, candidates investigate the processes of learning and education in their social context. The aim is to understand the factors affecting educational achievement and to recognise different perspectives on the role of education within wider society.

5 Education and society

Candidates will investigate the contribution of education to social order, ideological control and economic reproduction, which links to the key concept of *Power, control and resistance*. Candidates will examine the relationship between education and social mobility, and discuss the extent to which educational achievement is determined by wider social forces. This will stimulate thinking about the key concepts of *Inequality and opportunity* and *Structure and human agency*.

5.1 Theories about the role of education

- Functionalist views about how education contributes to value consensus and social solidarity.
- Education and role allocation.
- Marxist views about how education contributes to the maintenance of the capitalist economic system.
- Education as an instrument of ideological control and cultural reproduction.
- New Right and social democratic views on the relationship between education and the economy.

5.2 Education and social mobility

- Equal opportunity and the idea of meritocracy.
- The extent to which education systems are meritocratic today.
- The importance of education in influencing life chances, and the consequences of educational under-achievement for the individual and for society.
- Evidence and arguments about the links between education and social mobility.

5.3 Influences on the curriculum

- The social construction of knowledge.
- Factors influencing the content of the curriculum, including power, status, culture, economic demands, and gender.
- Education and cultural reproduction, including the ethnocentric curriculum, the gendered curriculum, and the hidden curriculum.
- The curriculum and the concept of cultural capital.

6 Education and inequality

Candidates will consider explanations for inequalities in educational attainment relating to social class, ethnicity and gender, and continue their thinking about the key concept of *Inequality and opportunity*. In addition, candidates will examine cultural explanations for differences in educational attainment, which relates to the key concept of *Socialisation, culture and identity*.

6.1 Intelligence and educational attainment

- The difficulties in defining intelligence.
- IQ tests and the extent to which they are influenced by social factors.
- Intelligence as an influence on educational attainment.

6.2 Social class and educational attainment

- The relationship between material factors and educational attainment.
- Cultural explanations for patterns in social class and educational attainment, including parental attitudes, values, speech codes, and cultural capital.
- In-school factors, including labelling, ability grouping and pupil subcultures.
- Compensatory education programmes.

6.3 Ethnicity and educational attainment

- Racism in schools.
- Cultural explanations for patterns in ethnicity and educational attainment.
- Ethnicity and subcultures.
- The relationship between ethnicity, social class and gender.

6.4 Gender and educational attainment

- The relationship between gender socialisation and educational attainment.
- Wider social changes and gendered educational achievement, including changing female expectations and the crisis of masculinity.
- Gender and subcultures.
- Teacher expectations and gendered behaviour in the classroom.

Paper 4 – Globalisation

In this topic area, candidates explore sociological debates and perspectives on the impact of globalisation. The aim is to make connections between the local and the global, a ‘glocal’ approach, and to examine emerging areas of sociology, such as new forms of global crime, global inequalities and recent global migration patterns.

7 Key debates, concepts and perspectives

Candidates will explore the ideas and issues central to globalisation and will examine the impact of globalisation on identity. These connect to the key concepts of *Social change and development*, and *Socialisation, culture and identity*. Candidates will also explore the impact of globalisation on power and politics, which links to the key concepts of *Power, control and resistance* and *Social change and development*.

7.1 Perspectives on globalisation

- Key definitions and issues, including globalisation, glocalisation, global culture, and problems with defining globalisation.
- Different dimensions of globalisation including cultural, political and economic.
- Perspectives on who benefits from globalisation, including the Marxist, feminist, postmodernist, globalist, sceptic and transformationalist perspectives.

7.2 Globalisation and identity

- The impact of globalisation on identity, including ethnic revitalisation, cultural defence and hybrid identity.
- Cultural divergence versus cultural convergence/homogenisation.
- The role of Western ideology in shaping identity and the concept of Westernisation.

7.3 Globalisation, power and politics

- The spread of liberal democracy and human rights.
- Global social movements and attempts to oppose globalisation.
- Debates about the role of the nation state in tackling global social and environmental problems.

8 Contemporary issues

Candidates will explore patterns of global inequality and consider explanations for them. These ideas are central to the key concepts of *Power, control and resistance* and *Inequality and opportunity*. Through investigating the causes and consequences of migration, and by examining the nature of crime in a global context, candidates will address some wide-ranging examples of the key concept *Structure and human agency*.

8.1 Globalisation, poverty and inequalities

- Debates about the impact of globalisation on life chances in developing countries, in relation to education, income and health.
- The role of transnational organisations in tackling global inequalities and the extent to which they have been successful.
- Sociological explanations for global inequalities, including capitalism, colonialism, post-colonialism and patriarchy.

8.2 Globalisation and migration

- The causes of global migration, including immigration, emigration, net migration, push and pull factors, global labour patterns and tourism.
- The consequences of global migration, positive and negative, including cultural diversity, economic benefits, concerns over scarce resources and negative perceptions of migration.
- Debates about who benefits from migration.

8.3 Globalisation and crime

- Reasons for the emergence of global crimes, such as human trafficking, corporate crime and crimes against the environment.
- Explanations of who benefits from global crime, including Marxist and feminist perspectives.
- Policing and prosecuting global crime, including the benefits and challenges resulting from globalisation and new technology.

Paper 4 – Media

In this topic area, candidates examine how the media is being transformed by recent developments, such as the growth of the new media, and the implications this has for the wider society. The aim is to understand where power lies in relation to the media and how individuals are influenced by media effects.

9 Ownership and control of media

Candidates will explore trends that are transforming the media today, such as the growth of the internet and digitalisation, and examine the question of who controls the media. Candidates will consider the influences on media content, the role of the state in media regulation, and the growth of the new media. The key concepts of *Power, control and resistance*, and *Social change and development* are important to these issues.

9.1 Traditional media and the new media

- Trends affecting the organisation of the media, including cross-media ownership, digitalisation, media conglomerates and social media.
- Debates about who controls the media.
- Differences between the traditional media and the new media.
- The debate about whether the traditional media has been undermined by the growth of the new media.

9.2 Theories of the media and influences on media content

- Pluralist theories of the media.
- Marxist and neo-Marxist theories of the media.
- Factors that influence the selection and presentation of news.
- The concepts of mass manipulation and hegemony as different ways of understanding the production of media content.
- The postmodernist contribution to understanding the media.
- Censorship as a factor influencing media content.
- How the media may influence the political process, including agenda setting, opinion polls, and news reporting.

9.3 The impact of the new media

- How the new media is contributing to globalisation.
- The new media as a challenge to existing power structures.
- The debate about digital optimism versus digital pessimism.
- The impact of the new media on social identities and interpersonal relationships.

10 Media representation and effects

Candidates will consider media representations, models of media effects, and how the media influences human behaviour. These ideas are linked to the key concepts *Socialisation, culture and identity* and *Structure and human agency*. Candidates will also consider studies that illustrate the impact of the media on human behaviour, which links to the key concepts *Power, control and resistance*, and *Socialisation, culture and identity*.

10.1 Media representations of class, gender, ethnicity, and age groups

- How different groups are represented in the media.
- Ways that the media contributes to gender socialisation.
- Moral panics around class, gender, ethnicity and age groups.
- The relationship between the media and popular culture.

10.2 Different models of media effects

- Direct effects models of media influence, including the hypodermic syringe model.
- 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.
- Debates about the strengths and limitations of the different models of media effects.
- Arguments and evidence about the extent to which human behaviour is influenced by the media.

10.3 The impact of the media on behaviour

- Arguments and evidence about the extent to which violent media leads to violent behaviour.
- The impact of the media on crime, including deviance amplification and moral panics.
- Ways in which the media might have a positive impact on human behaviour.
- Ways in which people may be affected by media sensationalism and stereotyping.

Paper 4 – Religion

This topic area will develop candidates' understanding of religion in its social context. The aim is to study different explanations of the role of religion in society and to understand the nature of religious movements and the factors influencing the level of religiosity in particular communities.

11 Religion and social order

Candidates will explore the role of religion in society and its relevance for different social groups, which are central to the key concepts of *Power, control and resistance*, and *Socialisation, culture and identity*. Candidates will examine the contribution of religion to some of the most far-reaching economic, social and political transformations of our time, which links to the key concept of *Social change and development*. This will provide an opportunity to contrast structural and interactionist theories of religion, thereby drawing connections to the key concept of *Structure and human agency*.

11.1 Religion and society

- Ways of defining religion.
- Difficulties in measuring religious belief.
- Social groups and religiosity, including class, gender, ethnicity and age.
- Religion and other belief systems.

11.2 Religion and social order

- Functionalist accounts of how religion contributes to social order and social solidarity.
- Marxist accounts of the relationship between religion, oppression and capitalism.
- Debates about the strengths and limitations of functionalist and Marxist perspectives on religion.

11.3 Religion as a source of social change

- Weber's theory of the role of religion in the rise of capitalism.
- Alternative views about the relationship between religion and the origins of capitalism.
- Liberation theology as an example of religion acting as a vehicle for social change.
- 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.

12 The influence of religion

Candidates will consider whether modern societies have experienced a gradual process of secularisation, giving an opportunity to reflect on the key concept of *Social change and development*. Candidates will explore the links between feminist theory and the analysis of religion, linking to the key concepts of *Socialisation, culture and identity*, and *Power, control and resistance*. They will consider different religious movements and the influence they exercise over their followers. The analysis of fundamentalist religious movements also provides a context for applying the key concept of *Inequality and Opportunity*.

12.1 The secularisation debate

- The secularisation thesis.
- Evidence for a decline in religious belief.
- Discussions about whether rationalisation is leading to a decline in religious belief.
- Debates about whether religion has lost its social significance.

12.2 Gender, feminism and religion

- Feminist perspectives on religion.
- Explanations for patriarchy and gender inequality in religion.
- Moves towards gender equality in religious organisations and evidence that religious practices may benefit women.

12.3 Religion and post-modernity

- Discussions about whether there has been a growth in privatised religion.
- The concept of spiritual shopping and its contribution to understanding religiosity today.
- Debates about whether resacrilisation is a feature of post-modernity.
- The significance of new religious movements (NRMs) and New Age ideas for understanding the meaning and significance of religion today.
- Different explanations for the growth in fundamentalist religions, including cultural defence, cultural transition, disengagement, marginality, and religious revival.

4 Details of the assessment

Paper 1 – Socialisation, identity and methods of research

Written paper, 1 hour 30 minutes, 60 marks

Paper 1 contains two sections:

- Section A has three questions
- Section B has two essay questions

Candidates should answer **all** the questions in Section A, and choose **one** from two questions in Section B.

Section A

Question 1 is a short-answer question which requires candidates to demonstrate AO1 skills.

Question 2 has two parts (a and b):

- Part 2a questions require candidates to give two explanations for an issue, theory or viewpoint drawn from the syllabus, demonstrating AO1 and AO2 skills.
- Part 2b questions require candidates to evaluate a research method by explaining its strengths and/or limitations, demonstrating AO1 and AO3 skills.

Question 3 has two parts (a and b) based on a sociological view expressed in a quotation:

- Part 3a questions require candidates to explain the view expressed in the quotation, demonstrating AO1 and AO2 skills.
- Part 3b questions require candidates to use sociological material to argue against the view in the quotation, demonstrating AO2 and AO3 skills.

Section B

Questions 4 and 5 require an essay response, demonstrating AO1, AO2 and AO3 skills. Candidates should answer **one** of these two questions.

Paper 2 – The Family

Written paper, 1 hour 30 minutes, 60 marks

Paper 2 contains two sections:

- Section A has three questions
- Section B has two essay questions.

Candidates should answer **all** the questions in Section A, and choose **one** from two questions in Section B.

Section A

Question 1 is a short-answer question which requires candidates to demonstrate AO1 skills.

Question 2 has two parts (a and b):

- Part 2a questions require candidates to give two explanations for an issue, theory or viewpoint drawn from the syllabus, demonstrating AO1 and AO2 skills.
- Part 2b questions require candidates to evaluate a sociological theory by explaining its strengths and/or limitations, demonstrating AO1 and AO3 skills.

Question 3 has two parts (a and b) based on a sociological view expressed in a quotation:

- Part 3a questions require candidates to explain the view expressed in the quotation, demonstrating AO1 and AO2 skills.
- Part 3b questions require candidates to use sociological material to argue against the view in the quotation, demonstrating AO2 and AO3 skills.

Section B

Questions 4 and 5 require an essay response, demonstrating AO1, AO2 and AO3 skills. Candidates should answer **one** of these two questions.

Paper 3 – Education

Written paper, 1 hour 15 minutes, 50 marks

Paper 3 has four questions, worth an increasing number of marks. Candidates should answer **all** the questions.

Question 1 is a short-answer question which requires candidates to demonstrate AO1 skills.

Question 2 requires candidates to give two explanations for an issue, theory or viewpoint drawn from the syllabus, demonstrating AO1 and AO2 skills.

Question 3 is based on a sociological view expressed in a quotation. Candidates are required to use sociological material to give two arguments against the view in the quotation, demonstrating AO2 and AO3 skills.

Question 4 requires an essay response, demonstrating AO1, AO2 and AO3 skills.

Paper 4 – Globalisation, Media and Religion

Written paper, 1 hour 45 minutes, 70 marks

Paper 4 contains three sections:

- Section A: Globalisation
- Section B: Media
- Section C: Religion

There are six essay questions, two in each section. Candidates should answer **two** questions, each from a different section.

These questions require an extended essay response, demonstrating AO1, AO2 and AO3 skills. Candidates should explore contrasting views or evidence, in order to show an understanding of the issues raised by the questions.

Command words

Command words and their meanings help candidates know what is expected from them in the exam. 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 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

5 What else you need to know

This section is an overview of other information you need to know about this syllabus. It will help to share the administrative information with your exams officer so they know when you will need their support. Find more information about our administrative processes at www.cambridgeinternational.org/eoguide

Before you start

Previous study

We do not expect learners starting this course to have previously studied Sociology.

Guided learning hours

We design Cambridge International AS & A Level syllabuses based on learners having about 180 guided learning hours for each Cambridge International AS Level and about 360 guided learning hours for a Cambridge International A Level. The number of hours a learner needs to achieve the qualification may vary according to local practice and their previous experience of the subject.

Availability and timetables

You can enter candidates in the June and November exam series. If your school is in India, you can enter your candidates in the March exam series. You can view the timetable for your administrative zone at www.cambridgeinternational.org/timetables

Private candidates can enter for this syllabus.

Combining with other syllabuses

Candidates can take this syllabus alongside other Cambridge International syllabuses in a single exam series. The only exceptions are:

- syllabuses with the same title at the same level.

Group awards: Cambridge AICE

Cambridge AICE (Advanced International Certificate of Education) is a group award for Cambridge International AS & A Level. It allows schools to offer a broad and balanced curriculum by recognising the achievements of learners who pass exams in a range of different subjects.

Learn more about Cambridge AICE at www.cambridgeinternational.org/aice

Making entries

Exams officers are responsible for submitting entries to Cambridge International. We encourage them to work closely with you to make sure they enter the right number of candidates for the right combination of syllabus components. Entry option codes and instructions for submitting entries are in the *Cambridge Guide to Making Entries*. Your exams officer has a copy of this guide.

Exam administration

To keep our exams secure, we produce question papers for different areas of the world, known as administrative zones. We allocate all Cambridge schools to one administrative zone determined by their location. Each zone has a specific timetable. Some of our syllabuses offer candidates different assessment options. An entry option code is used to identify the components the candidate will take relevant to the administrative zone and the available assessment options.

Support for exams officers

We know how important exams officers are to the successful running of exams. We provide them with the support they need to make your entries on time. Your exams officer will find this support, and guidance for all other phases of the Cambridge Exams Cycle, at www.cambridgeinternational.org/eoguide

Retakes and carry forward

Candidates can retake Cambridge International AS Level and Cambridge International A Level as many times as they want to. Cambridge International AS & A Levels are linear qualifications so candidates cannot re-sit individual components. Information on retake entries is in the *Cambridge Handbook* at www.cambridgeinternational.org/examsOfficers

Candidates can carry forward the result of their Cambridge International AS Level assessment from one series to complete the Cambridge International A Level in a following series, subject to the rules and time limits described in the *Cambridge Handbook*.

Language

This syllabus and the related assessment materials are available in English only.

Accessibility and equality

Syllabus and assessment design

Cambridge International works to avoid direct or indirect discrimination in our syllabuses and assessment materials. We aim to maximise inclusivity for candidates of all national, cultural or social backgrounds and with other protected characteristics. In addition, the language and layout used are designed to make our materials as accessible as possible. This gives all learners the opportunity, as fairly as possible, to demonstrate their knowledge, skills and understanding and helps to minimise the requirement to make reasonable adjustments during the assessment process.

Access arrangements

Access arrangements (including modified papers) are the principal way in which Cambridge International complies with our duty, as guided by the UK Equality Act (2010), to make ‘reasonable adjustments’ for candidates with special educational needs (SEN), disability, illness or injury. Where a candidate would otherwise be at a substantial disadvantage in comparison to a candidate with no SEN, disability, illness or injury, we may be able to agree pre-examination access arrangements. These arrangements help a candidate by minimising accessibility barriers and maximising their opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge, skills and understanding in an assessment.

Important:

- Requested access arrangements should be based on evidence of the candidate’s barrier to assessment and should also reflect their normal way of working at school; this is in line with *The Cambridge Handbook* www.cambridgeinternational.org/eoguide
- For Cambridge International to approve an access arrangement, we will need to agree that it constitutes a reasonable adjustment, involves reasonable cost and timeframe and does not affect the security and integrity of the assessment.
- Availability of access arrangements should be checked by centres at the start of the course. Details of our standard access arrangements and modified question papers are available in *The Cambridge Handbook* www.cambridgeinternational.org/eoguide
- Please contact us at the start of the course to find out if we are able to approve an arrangement that is not included in the list of standard access arrangements.
- Candidates who cannot access parts of the assessment may be able to receive an award based on the parts they have completed.

After the exam

Grading and reporting

Grades A*, A, B, C, D or E indicate the standard a candidate achieved at Cambridge International A Level. A* is the highest and E is the lowest grade.

Grades a, b, c, d or e indicate the standard a candidate achieved at Cambridge International AS Level. ‘a’ is the highest and ‘e’ is the lowest grade.

‘Ungraded’ means that the candidate’s performance did not meet the standard required for the lowest grade (E or e). ‘Ungraded’ is reported on the statement of results but not on the certificate. In specific circumstances your candidates may see one of the following letters on their statement of results:

- Q (PENDING)
- X (NO RESULT).

These letters do not appear on the certificate.

If a candidate takes a Cambridge International A Level and fails to achieve grade E or higher, a Cambridge International AS Level grade will be awarded if both of the following apply:

- the components taken for the Cambridge International A Level by the candidate in that series included all the components making up a Cambridge International AS Level
- the candidate's performance on the AS Level components was sufficient to merit the award of a Cambridge International AS Level grade.

On the statement of results and certificates, Cambridge International AS & A Levels are shown as General Certificates of Education, GCE Advanced Subsidiary Level (GCE AS Level) and GCE Advanced Level (GCE A Level).

School feedback: 'Cambridge International A Levels are the 'gold standard' qualification. They are based on rigorous, academic syllabuses that are accessible to students from a wide range of abilities yet have the capacity to stretch our most able.'

Feedback from: Director of Studies, Auckland Grammar School, New Zealand

How students, teachers and higher education can use the grades

Cambridge International A Level

Assessment at Cambridge International A Level has two purposes:

- to measure learning and achievement
The assessment:
 - confirms achievement and performance in relation to the knowledge, understanding and skills specified in the syllabus, to the levels described in the grade descriptions.
- to show likely future success
The outcomes:
 - help predict which students are well prepared for a particular course or career and/or which students are more likely to be successful
 - help students choose the most suitable course or career.

Cambridge International AS Level

Assessment at Cambridge International AS Level has two purposes:

- to measure learning and achievement
The assessment:
 - confirms achievement and performance in relation to the knowledge, understanding and skills specified in the syllabus.
- to show likely future success
The outcomes:
 - help predict which students are well prepared for a particular course or career and/or which students are more likely to be successful
 - help students choose the most suitable course or career
 - help decide whether students part way through a Cambridge International A Level course are making enough progress to continue
 - guide teaching and learning in the next stages of the Cambridge International A Level course.

Grade descriptions

Grade descriptions are provided to give an indication of the standards of achievement candidates awarded particular grades are likely to show. Weakness in one aspect of the examination may be balanced by a better performance in some other aspect.

Grade descriptions for Cambridge International A Level Sociology will be published after the first assessment of the A Level in 2021. Find more information at www.cambridgeinternational.org/alevel

Changes to this syllabus for 2024, 2025 and 2026

The syllabus has been updated. This is version 1, published September 2021.

There are no significant changes which affect teaching.

You must read the whole syllabus before planning your teaching programme.

Any textbooks endorsed to support the syllabus for examination from 2021 are still suitable for use with this syllabus.



School feedback: ‘While studying Cambridge IGCSE and Cambridge International A Levels, students broaden their horizons through a global perspective and develop a lasting passion for learning.’

Feedback from: Zhai Xiaoning, Deputy Principal, The High School Affiliated to Renmin University of China

We are committed to making our documents accessible in accordance with the WCAG 2.1 Standard. We're always looking to improve the accessibility of our documents. If you find any problems or you think we're not meeting accessibility requirements, contact us at info@cambridgeinternational.org with the subject heading: Digital accessibility. If you need this document in a different format, contact us and supply your name, email address and requirements and we will respond within 15 working days.

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