

# AQA GCSE Sociology Personal Learning Checklist

## UNIT 1

Studying Society Candidates should, at a basic level, be able to show some understanding of the distinctiveness of the sociological approach as opposed to, for example, the psychological, biological or journalistic, and should be aware that different kinds of explanations exist within sociology.

Candidates will be introduced to central terms and concepts used in sociology. For example:

- social structures, including the family, education and stratification systems
- social processes, including socialisation, social control and social change
- social issues, including the causes and consequences of inequality, and the sources, distribution and exercise of power and authority

Candidates should be aware that some central terms and concepts relevant to the topic areas covered by this specification, such as class or poverty, may be defined in more than one way.

Candidates should be able to:

- describe the research process with reference to the significance of research aims, hypotheses, pilot studies, sampling procedures, data collection and analysis and evaluation
- describe the instruments of the social survey, the questionnaire and the interview, and be able to explain their use, value and limitations. They should also be able to describe the use, value and limitations of longitudinal studies
- describe the use of direct observation, participant and non-participant, by sociologists, and be aware of the value and limitations of these methods
- distinguish between primary and secondary sources of data and to describe the use, value and limitations of the latter. Candidates should have some knowledge of the construction, value and limitations of official statistics and opinion polls
- make elementary deductions from diagrams, charts, graphs and tables of statistics as well as numerical, written and other visual material
- understand the significance of evidence in sociological discussions
- plan a simple research project, having regard to the ethical issues which might arise in the course of the research process. Candidates should be aware of ways in which sociological concepts and the results of sociological research may be useful in making and implementing policies, for example in the fields of education, welfare and criminal justice

## Education

Candidates should be able to:

- describe and explain, at a basic level, the present structure of the education system, and have an understanding of related debates such as those about faith schools, testing, special needs, and alternative forms of educational provision
- describe and explain, at a basic level, variations in educational achievement in terms of class, gender and ethnicity.
- identify a range of influences on educational achievement, for example, parental values, peer groups, school ethos, streaming, labelling, teacher expectation, economic circumstances, cultural and ethnic background
- describe and explain at a basic level the various functions that education is expected to fulfil today, such as serving the needs of the economy, facilitating social mobility and encouraging 'Britishness' and social cohesion. Candidates should be aware of education as a political issue

and be able, at a basic level, to explain both why education reforms have been made and criticisms of those reforms.

## Families

Candidates should be able to:

- define 'family' and to explain the presence of diverse forms of the family in Britain today: eg married/non-married, couple/lone parent, heterosexual/gay, extended/nuclear and reconstituted.

Candidates should be aware of cultural diversity, migration and changing working patterns as influences on marriage and the family in Britain. Candidates should understand that an individual might live in many different family situations during a lifetime; and should be able to explain important changes that are taking place in family structures, eg the increase in single person households.

Candidates should be able to:

- describe and explain role and authority relationships, eg between men and women, parent(s) and children, members of the wider family, describe changes in these relationships, and relate them to the factors influencing such changes
- describe and explain changes in the patterns of fertility and expectations of life and be aware of their significance for individuals, family and society generally
- describe and explain, at a basic level, different sociological approaches to the family, both positive and critical, including, for example, the functionalist, the feminist
- describe and explain changes in the pattern of divorce in Britain since 1945 and be aware of the consequence of divorce for family members and structures. Candidates should have a basic knowledge of contemporary family-related issues, such as the quality of parenting, the relationship between teenagers and adults, care of the disabled/elderly and arranged marriage.

## Unit 2

In Unit 2 (required to complete the Full Course) candidates may choose three out of four options, with a further element of choice provided in the final (extended written) element of each question. The areas of the specification included in Unit 2 are: Crime and Deviance; Mass Media; Power; Social Inequality.

### Crime and Deviance

Candidates should be able to:

- distinguish the concepts of crime and deviance
- describe the ways in which individuals are encouraged to conform to social rules both formal and informal. Candidates should be aware, at a basic level, of the social distribution of crime, eg class, age, gender, ethnicity and locality.

Candidates should be able to:

- outline different sociological explanations of criminal and deviant behaviour, such as sub-cultural theories, labelling theory and relative deprivation
- assess, at a basic level, the usefulness of official crime figures, and self-report and victim studies, to sociologists
- describe the significance of criminal and deviant behaviour for victims, communities and society in general.

Candidates should be aware, at a basic level, of the ways in which criminal and deviant behaviour have generated public debates in recent years.

Candidates should understand, at a basic level, the nature and significance of social problems such as racism and teenage crime.

### Mass Media

Candidates should be able to identify the mass media and outline the major characteristics of this means of communication.

Candidates should be aware:

- that there are different views of the nature of the relationship between the mass media and audience and how this may be affected by new technologies
- of the significance of the mass media within the socialisation process and be able to describe, at a basic level, its part, along with other agents of socialisation, in the development of people's political and social identities and views
- of the media as a source of power for the individuals and organisations which own and/or control it, and be able to describe and explain the exercise of this power through, for example, agenda setting, the creation and dissemination of positive/negative images of particular groups/organisations, eg environmentalists, animal rights activists and lone parents
- of the potential significance for the distribution of power of technological developments, such as the internet
- of the ways in which the media may encourage stereotyping, and be able to describe the process of deviancy amplification
- of contemporary media related issues, such as whether media exposure encourages violence.

### Power

Candidates should have a basic understanding of the role of citizens in the political process in Britain.

Candidates should be able to:

- describe the opportunities for, and limitations on, participation in the political process, at local and national level, by individuals and communities and sections of society
- explain what might increase or lower the chances of such participation being successful
- explain how and why social factors such as age, gender, ethnicity and class influence the pattern of political participation and the distribution of political authority and power

Candidates should be aware of the ways in which governments have attempted to alleviate social problems, such as those associated with discrimination, including the ageing population, unemployment and poverty.

Candidates should be able to describe, at a basic level, the different political positions in debates about the Welfare State.

Candidates should be aware, at a basic level, of the nature and significance of power relationships in 'everyday' situations, such as those between employees and employers; children, parents, school teachers and other children; members of the public and the police.

### Social Inequality

Candidates should be able to:

- describe and explain the nature of stratification as involving the unequal distribution of wealth, income, status and power
- describe and use appropriately the major concepts involved in the analysis of stratification, including class, status and life chances
- identify and describe forms of stratification based on class, gender, ethnicity, age and religion

- ❑ describe and explain the ways in which life chances are influenced by differences in wealth, income, power and status; and describe and explain the relationship between such inequalities and social factors such as class, gender and ethnicity.

Candidates should be able, at a basic level, to describe different sociological explanations of poverty, and be aware of the strengths and weaknesses of such explanations, for example, the cycle of poverty, the culture of poverty, structural explanations, welfare dependency, long-term unemployment and exclusion.

Candidates should be aware of continuities in the recent pattern of inequality and should have an understanding of major debates about stratification, such as whether modern Britain is becoming a meritocracy/classless society, whether class inequality/division has become less significant than inequalities/divisions based on gender, ethnicity or age.