

Frequently asked questions: AS and A-level Sociology

Webinar: Progressing through A-level Sociology: tracking, assessment and exemplars

Date: 22 February 2016

The following are a list of questions raised during the above webinar. Answers have been provided for your assistance:

What will the AS and A-level grade boundaries be?

We cannot confirm what the grade boundaries will be. With all exams these are decided after the exams have been set each year. The following is a link to a short video explaining how grade boundaries are set: [Grade boundaries](#).

Do the students need to explicitly “evaluate” on the 10 mark questions, or is the AO3 focus purely on analysis?

In the outline and explain 10 mark questions, the student is analysing rather than evaluating ie they will be required to present the argument but not make a judgment. In the 10 mark analyse questions on the A-level paper, the student will need to analyse and evaluate ie they will need to present the argument, make judgments and draw conclusions.

What constitutes 'evaluation' and 'analysis' in the 16 mark research methods question on AS Paper 2?

The student will be required to present an argument, make a judgement and provide a summation. For example, in question 2 on the AS Paper 1 specimen paper available on the AQA website, the student is required to apply knowledge of participant observation (PO) and present arguments for some of the problems of using PO.

Do questions with an “Item” need an introduction and conclusion?

Only for ‘evaluate’ questions.

Will there be a resource made available with the methodologies of studies as it takes a long time to compile this as textbooks don't always include the methods used?

In my view, there are sufficient studies whose methodologies are identified in the available textbooks.

Are there any model answers - or even answers for the different bands available?

Marked student answers are available on our website for the first set of specimen papers. Marked student answers for all questions on the second set of specimen papers are available on e-AQA.

How do you summarise the content for students.

Some suggestions on how to deliver the content are provided in the detailed scheme of work available on our website.

How many studies do students need to know? Do they need one for every topic?

Typically, a good essay will refer to several studies (depending on length of essay).

How many methods should be included? Do you have a list of the methods with a study for each? For example, which methods to use for experiments and which to use for observations. A list of the methods with a study by each would be very useful.

All the methods named in the specification should be covered. Examples of studies using them can be found in most textbooks.

Which is better - PET or PERVRT?

Neither is better; it is a matter of choice for teachers and students.

Is comparing and contrasting evaluation rather than analysis? I always thought analysis was for eg this means that, this leads to, consequently etc.

Analysis.

How can Carol Smart be used in the Families and Households topic?

There is a podcast on the Sociology of Personal Life available on our website which will provide you with some direction. Some additional reading that can be used to assist with this topic is:

- Sociology of Personal Life: Vanessa May
- Sociology of Family life: Deb Chambers
- Displaying families: Esther Dermott and Julie Seymour

On the 20 mark methods question which asks the student to evaluate problems with a method, can students gain any credit for contrasting with strengths?

Yes, but the focus should be on the problems.

The new specification emphasises globalisation through all topics. How can these links be made?

There is a podcast available on our website that considers globalisation across the units that may assist you.

What is the best A-level book to use and any resources you recommend for the new A-level?

There are three textbooks endorsed by AQA. Details are available on our website ([Textbooks](#)). Please note that purchase of these books is not essential to deliver our specifications but have been reviewed by a senior examiner to ensure their compliance with the new specifications.

How long should the answer to the 10 mark outline and explain question be?

There are two lines per mark. However, additional space is always added to accommodate different writing styles. There is an exemplar of an answer to this type of question available on our website.

Will question 02 on AS Paper 2 be focused on just evaluating the PROBLEMS of a particular sociological method?

Not necessarily. Please refer to the second set of specimen papers available on e-AQA for an example of another question of this type.

Can a student get full marks on a 10 mark question without clear use of Sociologists? Would they be able to use theory but limited studies?

Yes, provided that what they wrote was both sociological and relevant to the set question.

When students include two applications in their 10 mark outline and explain questions, should this be in a descriptive manner?

Responses must be expressed in essay format/continuous prose.

Can marks be achieved for application in the 10 mark outline and explain questions by using example studies, or extended reading in media?

The marks for application will be awarded for a student's ability to apply knowledge from one part of the specification to another.

Does the answer to a 10 mark outline and explain question need an introduction and conclusion or simply two evaluated paragraphs?

No.

Should we be teaching more than two compulsory topics and two optional topics?

This is not necessary.

What are the allocation of marks for the 10 mark questions? How many marks are for AO2 and AO1?

The allocation of marks per assessment objective is shown on the back page of the mark scheme for each paper. For the 10 mark outline and explain question 5 marks for AO1; 3 marks for AO2; 2 marks for AO3.

When students are applying core themes in their answers to questions, do they mention that they are 'core themes' explicitly?

No.
