

GCSE

Specification

Sociology

**Short Course – for exams June 2014 onwards
and certification June 2014 onwards**

**Full Course – for exams June 2014 onwards
and certification June 2014 onwards**



Contents

1	Introduction	2
1.1	Why choose AQA?	2
1.2	Why choose Sociology?	2
1.3	How do I start using this specification?	3
1.4	How can I find out more?	3
2	Specification at a Glance	4
3	Subject Content	5
3.1	Unit 1 Studying Society; Education; Families – 41901	5
3.2	Unit 2 Crime and Deviance; Mass Media; Power; Social Inequality – 41902	6
4	Scheme of Assessment	8
4.1	Aims and learning outcomes	8
4.2	Assessment Objectives	8
4.3	National criteria	9
4.4	Prior learning	10
4.5	Access to assessment: diversity and inclusion	10
5	Administration	11
5.1	Availability of assessment units and certification	11
5.2	Entries	11
5.3	Private candidates	11
5.4	Access arrangements and special consideration	12
5.5	Language of examinations	12
5.6	Qualification titles	12
5.7	Awarding grades and reporting results	12
5.8	Examination Series	13
	Appendices	14
A	Grade Descriptions	14
B	Spiritual, Moral, Ethical, Social, Legislative, Sustainable Development, Economic and Cultural Issues, and Health and Safety Considerations	15
C	Overlaps with other Qualifications	16
D	Wider Key Skills	17

1 Introduction

1

1.1 Why choose AQA?

AQA is the UK's favourite exam board and more students receive their academic qualifications from AQA than from any other board. But why is AQA so popular?

AQA understands the different requirements of each subject by working in partnership with teachers. Our GCSEs:

- enable students to realise their full potential
- contain engaging content
- are manageable for schools and colleges
- are accessible to students of all levels of ability
- lead to accurate results, delivered on time
- are affordable and value for money.

AQA provides a comprehensive range of support services for teachers:

- access to subject departments
- training for teachers including practical teaching strategies and approaches that really work presented by senior examiners
- personalised support for Controlled Assessment
- 24 hour support through our website and online *Ask AQA*
- past question papers and mark schemes
- comprehensive printed and electronic resources for teachers and students

AQA is an educational charity focused on the needs of the learner. All our income goes towards operating and improving the quality of our specifications, examinations and support services. We don't aim to profit from education – we want you to.

If you are an existing customer then we thank you for your support. If you are thinking of moving to AQA then we look forward to welcoming you.

1.2 Why choose Sociology?

- Students develop a wide range of knowledge and understanding about society, and how sociologists study and understand its structures, processes and issues.
- Sociology is exciting, interesting and relevant to students' lives. This specification encourages students to take a questioning approach to evidence and issues, thus developing their critical, evaluative skills.

- A simplified specification, with no tiering and no coursework requirements.
- This specification has been developed to enable a smooth progression to GCE Sociology, so students who do this GCSE Sociology specification will be well prepared when moving on to AS and A Level Sociology.

1.3 How do I start using this specification?

Already using the existing AQA Sociology specification?

- Register to receive further information, such as mark schemes, past question papers, details of teacher support meetings, etc, at **<http://www.aqa.org.uk/rn/askaqa.php>** Information will be available electronically or in print, for your convenience.
- Tell us that you intend to enter candidates. Then we can make sure that you receive all the material you need for the examinations. This is particularly important where examination material is issued before the final entry deadline. You can let us know by completing the appropriate Intention to Enter and Estimated Entry forms. We will send copies to your Exams Officer and they are also available on our website (**http://www.aqa.org.uk/admin/p_entries.php**).

Not using the AQA specification currently?

- Almost all centres in England and Wales use AQA or have used AQA in the past and are approved AQA centres. A small minority is not. If your centre is new to AQA, please contact our centre approval team at **centreapproval@aqa.org.uk**

1.4 How can I find out more?

Ask AQA

You have 24-hour access to useful information and answers to the most commonly-asked questions at **<http://www.aqa.org.uk/rn/askaqa.php>**

If the answer to your question is not available, you can submit a query for our team. Our target response time is one day.

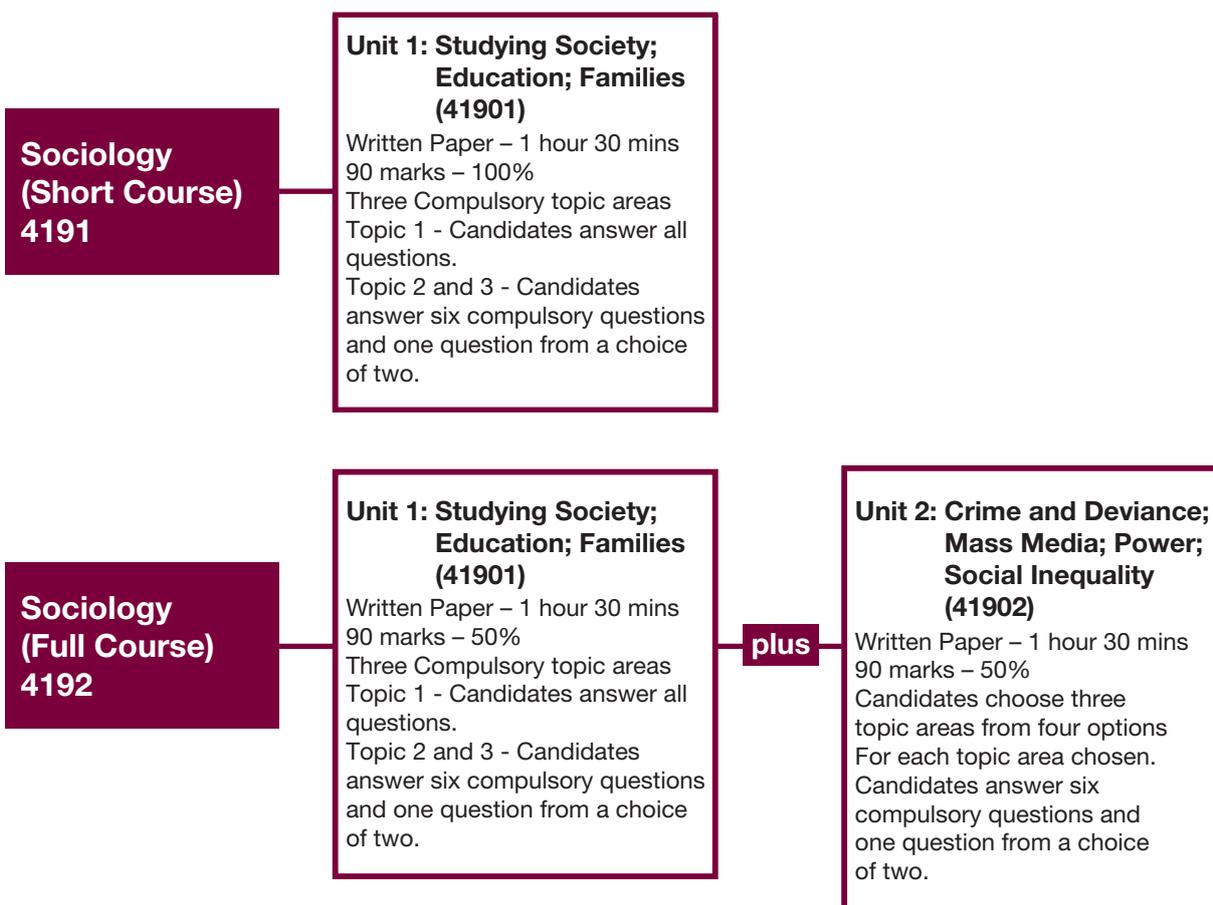
Teacher Support

Details of the full range of current Teacher Support and CPD courses are available on our web site at **<http://web.aqa.org.uk/qual/cpd/index.php>**

There is also a link to our fast and convenient online booking system for all of our courses at **<http://coursesandevents.aqa.org.uk/training>**

2 Specification at a Glance

2



For assessments and subject awards after June 2013 there is a requirement that 100% of the assessment is terminal.

3 Subject Content

The Subject Content is divided into sections that deal with particular kinds of social relations or with different aspects of the social structure of British society. However, teachers are encouraged to stress the connections within social life and to examine the links between various kinds of social relations. They should show the role of sociological concepts, models and perspectives concerned with both structure and process, in understanding and explaining patterns of social life.

In all areas of the specification teachers are encouraged to use comparisons with and examples from other societies. Candidates should be familiar with a range of terms and concepts commonly used by sociologists. It is also anticipated that teachers may well encourage candidates to undertake small scale research projects in order to develop their understanding of the practical difficulties faced

by the sociologist working in the field. However, at GCSE a detailed knowledge of the work of particular sociologists is not required, nor is there any requirement for coursework in this subject. Ultimately, the specification should enable candidates to use their knowledge of the world in which they live and their ability to understand and analyse it critically; it is not intended to encourage the mere transmission of factual knowledge.

Candidates should appreciate that Sociology is not a subject that can be understood in terms of isolated conceptual areas. Each section of the specification is connected and inter-related and candidates would benefit from gaining a proper appreciation of more than one section in order to develop their understanding. This will allow them to demonstrate their ability to apply information acquired in a particular area to other parts of the specification.

3

3.1 Unit 1

In Unit 1 (Short Course) all questions are compulsory although, in two of the three compulsory sections, a choice of questions is provided for the final element of each question (this element offers candidates an opportunity to write an extended answer). This Unit focuses on three areas of the specification: Studying Society; Families; Education.

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.

3.2 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.

Teachers entering candidates for the Full Course (Units 1 and 2) are strongly advised to teach all the subject content.

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.

4 Scheme of Assessment

4.1 Aims and learning outcomes

GCSE courses based on this specification should encourage candidates to:

GCSE courses based on this specification should encourage learners to be inspired, moved and challenged by following a broad, coherent, satisfying and worthwhile course of study and to reflect on their own experience of the social world to enhance their ability to play informed roles within different social contexts. They should prepare learners to make informed decisions about further learning opportunities and career choices.

GCSE courses based on this specification must enable learners to:

- recognise that their sociological knowledge, understanding and skills help them to develop an understanding of the interrelationships between individuals, groups, institutions and societies
- analyse critically the nature and sources of information and to base reasoned judgements and arguments on evidence
- organise and communicate their knowledge and understanding in different and creative ways, and reach substantiated judgements.

4.2 Assessment Objectives (AOs)

The assessment units will assess the following assessment objectives in the context of the content and skills set out in Section 3 (Subject Content).

Assessment Objectives	
AO1	Recall, select and communicate knowledge and understanding of social structures, processes and issues
AO2	Apply knowledge and understanding in a range of contexts both familiar and unfamiliar
AO3	Select, interpret, analyse and evaluate information from different sources

Quality of Written Communication (QWC)

GCSE specifications which require candidates to produce written material in English must:

- ensure that text is legible and that spelling, punctuation and grammar are accurate so that meaning is clear

- select and use a form and style of writing appropriate to purpose and to complex subject matter
- organise information clearly and coherently, using specialist vocabulary when appropriate.

In this specification QWC will be assessed in units 1 and 2 by means of Assessment Objectives in all questions where extended writing is required.

Weighting of Assessment Objectives for GCSE Short Course

The table below shows the approximate weighting of each of the Assessment Objectives in the GCSE Short Course unit.

Assessment Objectives	Unit Weighting (%)	Overall Weighting of AOs (%)
AO1	40	40
AO2	40	40
AO3	20	20
Overall weighting of units (%)	100	100

Weighting of Assessment Objectives for GCSE Full Course

The table below shows the approximate weighting of each of the Assessment Objectives in the GCSE Full Course unit.

Assessment Objectives	Unit Weighting (%)		Overall Weighting of AOs (%)
	Unit 1	Unit 2	
AO1	20	20	40
AO2	20	20	40
AO3	10	10	20
Overall weighting of units (%)	50	50	100

4

4.3 National criteria

This specification complies with the following.

- The Subject Criteria for GCSE Sociology
- Code of Practice
- The GCSE Qualification Criteria
- The Arrangements for the Statutory Regulation of External Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland: Common Criteria
- The requirements for qualifications to provide access to Levels 1 and 2 of the National Qualification Framework.

4.4 Prior learning

There are no prior learning requirements.

However, any requirements set for entry to a course following this specification are at the discretion of centres.

4.5 Access to assessment: diversity and inclusion

GCSEs often require assessment of a broader range of competences. This is because they are general qualifications and, as such, prepare candidates for a wide range of occupations and higher level courses.

The revised GCSE qualification and subject criteria were reviewed to identify whether any of the competences required by the subject presented a potential barrier to any candidates regardless of their ethnic origin, religion, gender, age, disability or sexual orientation. If this was the case, the situation was

reviewed again to ensure such competences were included only where essential to the subject. The findings of this process were discussed with groups who represented the interests of a diverse range of candidates.

Reasonable adjustments are made for disabled candidates in order to enable them to access the assessments. For this reason, very few candidates will have a complete barrier to any part of the assessment. Further details are given in Section 5.4.

5 Administration

5.1 Availability of assessment units and certification

Examinations and certification for this specification are available as follows:

	Availability of Units		Availability of Certification	
	Unit 1	Unit 2	Short Course	GCSE single award
June 2012	✓	✓	✓	✓
Jan 2013	✓			
June 2013	✓	✓	✓	✓
Jan 2014				
June 2014	✓	✓	✓	✓

Ofqual's revisions to the Code of Practice mean that from June 2014: assessments will only be available once a year in June with 100% of the assessment

being taken in the examination series in which the qualification is awarded.

5.2 Entries

Please refer to the current version of *Entry Procedures and Codes* for up to date entry procedures. You should use the following entry codes for the units and for certification.

Unit 1 – 41901
Unit 2 – 41902

GCSE Short Course certification – 4191
GCSE certification – 4192

Candidates have to enter all the assessment units at the end of the course, at the same time as they enter for the subject award.

5

5.3 Private candidates

This specification is available to private candidates. Private candidates should write to AQA for a copy of *Supplementary Guidance for Private Candidates*.

5.4 Access arrangements and special consideration

We have taken note of equality and discrimination legislation and the interests of minority groups in developing and administering this specification.

We follow the guidelines in the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) document: *Access Arrangements, Reasonable Adjustments and Special Consideration: General and Vocational Qualifications*. This is published on the JCQ website (<http://www.jcq.org.uk>) or you can follow the link from our website (<http://www.aqa.org.uk>).

Access arrangements

We can make arrangements so that candidates with special needs can access the assessment. These arrangements must be made **before** the examination. For example, we can produce a Braille paper for a candidate with a visual impairment.

Special consideration

We can give special consideration to candidates who have had a temporary illness, injury or indisposition at the time of the examination. Where we do this, it is given **after** the examination.

Applications for access arrangements and special consideration should be submitted to AQA by the Examinations Officer at the centre.

5.5 Language of examinations

We will provide units for this specification in English only.

5.6 Qualification titles

Qualifications based on this specification are:

- AQA GCSE Short Course in Sociology
- AQA GCSE in Sociology.

5.7 Awarding grades and reporting results

The GCSE and GCSE short course qualifications will be graded on an eight-grade scale: A*, A, B, C, D, E, F and G. Candidates who fail to reach the minimum standard for grade G will be recorded as U (unclassified) and will not receive a qualification certificate.

We will publish the minimum raw mark for each grade, for each unit, when we issue candidates' results. We will report a candidate's unit results to centres in terms of uniform marks and qualification results in terms of uniform marks and grades.

For each unit, the uniform mark corresponds to a grade as follows.

Each unit (maximum uniform mark = 100)

Grade	Uniform Mark Range
A*	90–100
A	80–89
B	70–79
C	60–69
D	50–59
E	40–49
F	30–39
G	20–29
U	0–19

We calculate a candidate's total uniform mark by adding together the uniform marks for the relevant units. We convert this total uniform mark to a grade as follows.

Short Course (maximum uniform mark = 100)

Grade	Uniform Mark Range
A*	90–100
A	80–89
B	70–79
C	60–69
D	50–59
E	40–49
F	30–39
G	20–29
U	0–19

Full Course (maximum uniform mark = 200)

Grade	Uniform Mark Range
A*	180–200
A	160–179
B	140–159
C	120–139
D	100–119
E	80–99
F	60–79
G	40–59
U	0–39

5.8 Examination series

Candidates have to enter all the assessment units at the end of the course, at the same time as they enter for the subject award.

Candidates will not be allowed to carry forward unit results from a short course in order to aggregate to a full course.

Appendices

A Grade Descriptions

Grade descriptions are provided to give a general indication of the standards of achievement likely to have been shown by candidates awarded particular grades. The descriptions should be interpreted in relation to the content outlined in the specification; they are not designed to define that content.

The grade awarded will depend in practice upon the extent to which the candidate has met the assessment objectives (see Section 4) overall. Shortcomings in some aspects of the candidates' performance may be balanced by better performances in others.

Grade	Descriptions
A	<p>Candidates recall accurately, select and communicate a range of knowledge and show detailed understanding of relevant social structures, processes and issues.</p> <p>They apply appropriate concepts, terms and theories effectively in a range of contexts. They recognise issues and debates and deploy relevant evidence to reach valid conclusions. They analyse links between structures, processes and issues to produce grounded analyses.</p> <p>They identify, explain and evaluate the use of a range of appropriate methods, sources, information and data to address a question or issue. They interpret accurately information and data presented in a variety of forms, critically evaluate the relevance of the evidence in relation to the arguments and outline appropriate conclusions.</p>
C	<p>Candidates recall, select and communicate their knowledge and understanding of different social structures, processes and issues.</p> <p>They apply appropriate concepts, terms and theories in a range of contexts and analyse in a limited way the structures, processes and issues mentioned in the specification. They recognise and describe relevant issues, making reference to appropriate arguments and evidence. They make straightforward links between structures, processes and issues.</p> <p>They identify and explain in a limited way the use of methods, sources, information and data to address a question or issue. They deploy a range of information and data as evidence for conclusions.</p>
F	<p>Candidates recall, select and communicate limited knowledge and understanding of some aspects of structures, models or processes and issues.</p> <p>They identify and explain in a simple, limited and uncritical way the use of methods, sources, information and data to address a question or issue. They identify evidence and relate it in a simple way to arguments. They present simple conclusions that are sometimes supported by evidence.</p>

B Spiritual, Moral, Ethical, Social, Legislative, Sustainable Development, Economic and Cultural Issues, and Health and Safety Considerations

AQA has taken great care to ensure that any wider issues, including those particularly relevant to the education of students at Key Stage 4, have been identified and taken into account in the preparation of this specification. They will only form part of the assessment requirements where they relate directly to the specific content of the specification and have been identified in Section 3: Content.

European Dimension

AQA has taken account of the 1988 Resolution of the Council of the European Community in preparing this specification and associated specimen units.

Environmental Education

AQA has taken account of the 1988 Resolution of the Council of the European Community and the Report “Environmental Responsibility: An Agenda for Further and Higher Education” 1993 in preparing this specification and associated specimen units.

Avoidance of Bias

AQA has taken great care in the preparation of this specification and specimen units to avoid bias of any kind.

C Overlaps with other Qualifications

There is some potential overlap with aspects of GCSE Health and Social Care and GCSE Psychology. Because the overlap is considered to be complementary, neither qualification is prohibited in combination with GCSE Sociology.

D Wider Key Skills

The replacement of Key Skills with Functional Skills

The Key Skills qualifications have been replaced by the **Functional Skills**. However, centres may claim proxies for Key Skills components and/or certification in the following series: January, March and June 2012. The **Administration Handbook for the Key Skills Standards 2012** has further details. All Examination Officers in centres offering AQA Key Skills and Wider Key Skills have been sent a letter outlining the details of the end dates of these subjects. Copies of the letters have also been sent to the Head of Centre and Key Skills coordinator. This is a brief outline of that information. It is correct as at August 2011 and replaces the information on the same subject found in other documents on the AQA website:

- **Key Skills Levels 1, 2 and 3 Test and Portfolio**
The final opportunity for candidates to enter for a level 1, 2 or 3 Key Skills test or portfolio was June 2011 with the last certification in 2012.
- **Key Skills Level 4** The last series available to candidates entering for the Key Skills Level 4 test and portfolio was June 2010 with the last certification in the June series 2012.
- **Basic Skills Adult Literacy Levels 1 and 2, Adult Numeracy Levels 1 and 2** AQA Basic Skills qualifications will now be available until, at least, the June 2012 series.

Funding

We have received the following advice on the funding of learners undertaking these qualifications:

- Currently the **Skills Funding Agency** funds Basic Skills in literacy and numeracy for adult, 19 plus, learners only. There are various support funds for learners aged 16-18 administered by the **Young People's Learning Agency (YPLA)**. These include EMA (until the end of the 2010/11 academic year), Care to Learn and discretionary learner support hardship funding for learners living away from home.
- This information is correct at the time of publication. If you would like to check the funding provision post-June 2011, please call the **Skills Funding Agency** helpdesk on 0845 377 5000.
- **Wider Key Skills** The AQA Wider Key Skills qualifications are no longer available. The last portfolio moderation took place in June 2011.

Further updates to this information will be posted on the website as it becomes available.

http://web.aqa.org.uk/qual/keyskills/wider_noticeboard.php



GCSE Sociology Teaching from September 2012 onwards

Qualification Accreditation Number: 500/4436/9 and 500/4437/0 (Short Course)

Every specification is assigned a national classification code indicating the subject area to which it belongs. The classification code for this specification is 4890.

Centres should be aware that candidates who enter for more than one GCSE qualification with the same classification code will have only one grade (the highest) counted for the purpose of the School and College Performance Tables.

Centres may wish to advise candidates that, if they take two specifications with the same classification code, schools and colleges are very likely to take the view that they have achieved only one of the two GCSEs. The same view may be taken if candidates take two GCSE specifications that have different classification codes but have significant overlap of content. Candidates who have any doubts about their subject combinations should check with the institution to which they wish to progress before embarking on their programmes.

To obtain free specification updates and support material or to ask us a question register with Ask AQA:

www.aqa.org.uk/ask-aqa/register

Support meetings are available throughout the life of the specification.

Further information is available at:

<http://events.aqa.org.uk/ebooking>

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