

Syllabus

Cambridge O Level Sociology

Syllabus code 2251

For examination in June and November 2011



UNIVERSITY *of* CAMBRIDGE
International Examinations

Note for Exams Officers: Before making Final Entries, please check availability of the codes for the components and options in the E3 booklet (titled "Procedures for the Submission of Entries") relevant to the exam session. Please note that component and option codes are subject to change.

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1. Introduction

1.1 Why choose Cambridge?

University of Cambridge International Examinations (CIE) is the world's largest provider of international qualifications. Around 1.5 million students from 150 countries enter Cambridge examinations every year. What makes educators around the world choose Cambridge?

Developed for an international audience

International O Levels have been designed specially for an international audience and are sensitive to the needs of different countries. These qualifications are designed for students whose first language may not be English and this is acknowledged throughout the examination process. The curriculum also allows teaching to be placed in a localised context, making it relevant in varying regions.

Recognition

Cambridge O Levels are internationally recognised by schools, universities and employers as equivalent to UK GCSE. They are excellent preparation for A/AS Level, the Advanced International Certificate of Education (AICE), US Advanced Placement Programme and the International Baccalaureate (IB) Diploma. CIE is accredited by the UK Government regulator, the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA). Learn more at www.cie.org.uk/recognition.

Support

CIE provides a world-class support service for teachers and exams officers. We offer a wide range of teacher materials to Centres, plus teacher training (online and face-to-face) and student support materials. Exams officers can trust in reliable, efficient administration of exams entry and excellent, personal support from CIE Customer Services. Learn more at www.cie.org.uk/teachers.

Excellence in education

Cambridge qualifications develop successful students. They not only build understanding and knowledge required for progression, but also learning and thinking skills that help students become independent learners and equip them for life.

Not-for-profit, part of the University of Cambridge

CIE is part of Cambridge Assessment, a not-for-profit organisation and part of the University of Cambridge. The needs of teachers and learners are at the core of what we do. CIE invests constantly in improving its qualifications and services. We draw upon education research in developing our qualifications.

1. Introduction

1.2 Why choose Cambridge O Level Sociology?

International O Levels are established qualifications that keep pace with educational developments and trends. The International O Level curriculum places emphasis on broad and balanced study across a wide range of subject areas. The curriculum is structured so that students attain both practical skills and theoretical knowledge.

Cambridge O Level Sociology is accepted by universities and employers as proof of ability and understanding. Successful Cambridge O Level Sociology candidates gain lifelong skills, including:

- a better understanding of how we become who we are;
- the ability to analyse human behaviour within one's own society, between different cultures and across different periods of time;
- an appreciation of the effects that choice of methodology can have on social science investigations;
- the ability to use sociological evidence and ideas to challenge one's own beliefs and the beliefs of other people about issues such as equality, education, the family and crime.

Cambridge O Level Sociology is an ideal foundation for further study at A Level, and the skills learnt can also be used in other areas of study and in everyday life.

Students may also study for a Cambridge O Level in other Social Science subjects. In addition to Cambridge O Levels, CIE also offers Cambridge IGCSE and International A & AS Levels for further study in Sociology as well as other related subjects. See www.cie.org.uk for a full list of the qualifications you can take.

1.3 How can I find out more?

If you are already a Cambridge Centre

You can make entries for this qualification through your usual channels, e.g. your regional representative, the British Council or CIE Direct. If you have any queries, please contact us at international@cie.org.uk.

If you are not a Cambridge Centre

You can find out how your organisation can become a Cambridge Centre. Email either your local British Council representative or CIE at international@cie.org.uk. Learn more about the benefits of becoming a Cambridge Centre at www.cie.org.uk.

2. Assessment at a glance

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Candidates take:	
Paper 1	2 hours 30 minutes
Candidates answer one compulsory question on sociological research methods and three optional questions on culture and socialisation; social stratification and inequality and power and authority.	
Weighting: 60% of total marks	
and:	
Paper 2	1 hour 45 minutes
Candidates answer three optional questions on the family; education; crime, deviance and social control and the mass media.	
Weighting: 40% of total marks	

3. Syllabus aims and assessment

3.1 Aims

The aims of this syllabus are set out below and describe the educational purposes of Cambridge O Level Sociology. The aims are to:

1. promote candidates' awareness, knowledge and understanding of human societies
2. develop candidates' understanding of sociological method, including the collection, analysis and interpretation of data
3. provide an introduction to sociological concepts, theories and research findings
4. stimulate awareness of the range and limitations of sociological theory and research
5. promote candidates' understanding of continuity and change in social life
6. encourage a critical awareness of social, economic and political processes, and their effects
7. develop the capacity for the critical evaluation of different forms of information and evidence
8. promote an appreciation and understanding of individual, social and cultural diversity
9. enhance candidates' ability to apply sociological knowledge and understanding to their own lives and participation within society.

3.2 Assessment objectives and their weightings

Assessment Objectives (AOs) are intended areas of competence within the subject. To pass O Level Sociology candidates must demonstrate the following:

AOA: Knowledge and understanding

Candidates should be able to:

- 1 demonstrate knowledge and understanding of appropriate sociological topics
- 2 understand the theoretical and practical considerations influencing the design and execution of sociological enquiry
- 3 understand and apply sociological terminology and concepts.

AOB: Interpretation of evidence

Candidates should be able to:

- 4 demonstrate an awareness of the main methods of sociological enquiry and their uses
- 5 interpret and apply relevant evidence and data
- 6 show an awareness of different types and sources of evidence.

3. Syllabus aims and assessment

AOC: Analysis and Evaluation

Candidates should be able to:

- 7 evaluate the strengths and limitations of particular sociological studies and methods
- 8 recognise limitations and bias in evidence and to distinguish between fact, opinion and value
- 9 reach conclusions based on a reasoned consideration of available evidence
- 10 organise and present sociological evidence and arguments in a coherent and purposeful form.

3.3 Weightings

Assessment Objective	Paper 1 (%)	Paper 2 (%)
A: Knowledge and understanding	40	40
B: Interpretation of evidence	30	30
C: Analysis and evaluation	30	30

The assessment objectives are weighted to give an indication of their relative importance. They are not intended to provide a precise statement of the number of marks allocated to particular assessment objectives.

3. Syllabus aims and assessment

3.4 Description of components

All candidates will take Papers 1 and 2.

Paper 1 (2½ hours)

Candidates will answer **one** compulsory question on sociological research methods from Section A and **three** questions from Sections B to D.

The compulsory question in Section A will be based on source material. The question will carry one third of the marks for the paper. Candidates should spend approximately three-quarters of an hour answering this question. Section A will test Syllabus Unit 1.

Sections B to D will consist of structured questions based on stimulus material. The stimulus will take the form of a short quotation or statement from a sociological source. Sections B to D will test Syllabus Units 2 to 4. There will be two questions related to each of these units.

Paper 1 will test syllabus units 1 to 4.

Paper 2 (1¾ hours)

This will consist of structured questions based on stimulus material. The stimulus will take the form of a short quotation or statement from a sociological source. Candidates will answer **three** questions from Sections A to D.

Paper 2 will test Syllabus Units 5 to 8. There will be two questions related to each of these units.

Marks will be allocated between the papers on the following basis:

Paper	Weighting
1	60%
2	40%

3.5 Exam combinations

Candidates can combine this syllabus in an exam session with any other CIE syllabus, except:

- 0495 IGCSE Sociology

4. Syllabus content

The content is organised into eight study units, which explore the nature of social relationships, processes and structures. The first unit provides a foundation for the other parts of the syllabus by considering the methods and procedures employed in sociological research. Promoting candidates' understanding of research methods and their limitations is a key component of the syllabus and this underpins each of the other study units.

Teachers should emphasise how different levels of social life (macro and micro) are interconnected and encourage candidates' awareness of the interrelated nature of the social structure. Candidates will also be expected to recognise the significance of class, gender, ethnic and age differences within societies. Cross-cultural and historical comparisons, analysis and examples are encouraged.

The Cambridge O Level Sociology syllabus has been designed so that teachers in any society can apply candidates' own experiences, local case studies and sociological work relating to their own way of life to an understanding of the central ideas and themes of Sociology in modern industrial societies.

Paper 1

Unit 1: Methodology

Candidates should develop an awareness of how information and data are collected in Sociology and be able to evaluate that information. Candidates' awareness of methodological issues and a critical approach to sociological evidence, including primary and secondary data, will support their understanding of other sections of the Sociology curriculum. Candidates will be expected to be familiar with the concepts of generalisation, objectivity, reliability and validity.

(a) How do sociologists study society?

- The main methods of investigation: participant and non-participant observation; questionnaires; interviews; experiments; case studies; longitudinal studies and content analysis.
- Research strategies, for example the use of pilot studies.
- Sampling and sampling methods.
- The stages in devising and implementing a research strategy and the problems that may be encountered.
- The distinction between positivist and interactionist perspectives.

(b) What information and data do sociologists use?

- Primary and secondary data.
- Official and other statistics.
- Published studies.
- Different forms of evidence.

4. Syllabus content

(c) What factors should be considered when evaluating a piece of sociological research?

- The method of data collection and the form of presentation may influence the information given and the conclusions reached.
- The distinction between reliability and validity.
- The potential influence of researcher bias and values in distorting sociological data.

Unit 2: Culture and Socialisation

This section considers the relationship between culture, society and the individual. Candidates need to consider the processes and agencies of socialisation.

(a) What is the relationship between individual and society?

- Structuralist and interactionist views of the relationship between individuals and society.
- The distinction between biological, psychological and social explanations of human behaviour.
- The diversity of human behaviour and cultural variation. For example, cultural differences in conceptions of childhood and adolescence and cultural differences in conceptions of normal gender-role behaviour and gender characteristics.

(b) How do we learn to be human?

- The processes of learning and socialisation; primary and secondary socialisation.
- Conformity and non-conformity; the agencies and processes of social control.
- Culture and sub-culture; norms, values, beliefs and ideology.
- Role, age, gender, ethnic group and class as categories in the social construction of differences.

Unit 3: Social Stratification and Inequality

This section explores the relationship between social, economic and political processes and patterns of stratification.

(a) What is social stratification?

- Patterns of social stratification with particular reference to differences based on wealth, income, status, power, ethnic group or gender.
- The main forms of stratification: slavery, estate, caste, class, age, ethnicity, sex.
- The distinction between ascribed and achieved status.
- Changes in patterns of social stratification that accompanied industrialisation.

4. Syllabus content

(b) How are social inequalities created? What are the main features of social inequality?

- Wealth and income: the evidence and reasons for the distribution of wealth and income in different societies. The problems of defining wealth and poverty and the consequences of being rich or poor.
- Ethnic grouping: a general knowledge of the nature, size and distribution of different ethnic groups in any one society. Prejudice and discrimination: evidence concerning discrimination in education, employment and life chances. The concept of scape-goats.
- Gender: the differences between sex and gender. The consequences of gender role socialisation. The reasons for, and nature of, the changing role of women in terms of occupation and social roles.
- Social class: evidence pointing to social class differences. The nature, extent and significance of social mobility. An appreciation of the implications of social class for chances in employment, health and life style. The changing nature of the working class, middle class and upper class.

Unit 4: Power and Authority

This section considers power, authority and decision-making in society.

(a) What is power? What are the sources of power and authority?

- The various forms of power, control and authority: charismatic, coercive, economic, bureaucratic and the control of ideas and beliefs.
- Aristocracy, oligarchy, democracy, dictatorship.
- Different theories of power: pluralist, Marxist, elite theory.
- Differing interpretations of the role of the State in contemporary societies.

(b) How are political decisions made? Who influences and makes political decisions?

- Decision making: the various forms – democratic and authoritarian.
- Some knowledge of the political processes in the candidate's own society and at least one other contrasting society.
- The role of political parties and pressure groups.
- Political socialisation and the media.
- Elections and the factors that influence voting behaviour.
- Freedom and censorship of ideas.

4. Syllabus content

Paper 2

Unit 5: Family

This section considers the functions the family performs, variations in family structures and the changing nature and roles performed within the family.

(a) Why families?

- The nature of the family with cross cultural comparisons, including monogamy, polygamy and polyandry.
- The extended and nuclear family.
- The functions of the family.
- The family as an agency of social control and of social stability.
- Alternatives to the family.
- Industrialisation and family change.

(b) What are the main roles within the family?

- The maternal and paternal roles; the role of the child and of members of the extended family.

(c) What changes are affecting the family?

- Demographic trends; marriage and divorce; single parent families.
- Changes in family role relationships.
- Cross-cultural variations.
- The 'loss of functions' debate.

Unit 6: Education

This section considers the influence of education on the individual and changing patterns and practices within the educational process.

(a) What is education?

- Informal and formal educational processes.
- Intelligence and its relationship to educational achievement.
- The relative effect of heredity and environment.
- The aims and functions of education.
- The relationship between education, social mobility and social stratification.
- Education as an agency of social control and social stability.
- Education as an influence for social changes.
- Alternatives to schools and schooling.

4. Syllabus content

(b) What factors help to explain differences in educational achievement?

- Differences in educational achievement and experience in relation to gender, ethnic group and class.
- The influence of the home and community background on differences in educational achievement.
- The curriculum and the hidden curriculum.
- The culture of schools and social interaction in the classroom.
- Language and culture as dimensions of social inequality in education systems.
- The influence of peer groups.

Unit 7: Crime, Deviance and Social Control

This section considers the nature of 'normal' and 'deviant' behaviour in different social contexts.

(a) What is normal behaviour and deviance? Why are there rules in society?

- Deviance: the relative nature of conformity, normality and deviance.
- The influences, both formal and informal, which help to maintain order in society: socialisation, the media, religion, the police and courts.
- The development of sub-cultures, with particular reference to youth cultures.

(b) Why are society's rules broken? What are the consequences of breaking the rules?

- Crime: the difference between deviance and crime, law and law-breaking.
- Explanations of deviant and criminal behaviour: biological, environmental, economic, psychological and sociological.
- The role of formal agencies, the media and others in defining deviance and crime: stereotyping, labelling and deviance amplification.
- The nature and extent of crime.
- An examination of official statistics of crime and their interpretation.

4. Syllabus content

Unit 8: The Mass Media

This section examines contemporary culture and communication through reference to the influence of the mass media.

(a) What are the mass media?

- The various forms of the mass media.
- The process of mass communication.
- Ownership and control of the mass media.
- Media cultures.
- Patterns of media use, for example by social class, age and gender.
- Freedom and censorship in the media.
- The stratification of forms of cultural expression: 'high culture', 'mass culture', 'popular culture', etc.
- Pluralist and Marxist perspectives on the nature and role of the media.
- The role of advertising.

(b) What is the impact and influence of the mass media?

- The process of communication and the media's role in shaping values, attitudes and behaviour with reference to, for example, television and violence; political beliefs and voting; patterns of consumption.
- The media's role in agenda setting and in creating images and stereotyping, for example, news broadcasting and newspapers.
- The issues of selection, distribution and bias in the media.
- The idea of repressive and manipulative forms of communication: indoctrination, propaganda, bias, distortion.

5. Appendix

5.1 Grade descriptions

The following grade descriptions are intended to give a general indication of the standards of achievement likely to have been achieved by candidates awarded Grades A, C and F. In practice, the grade awarded will depend upon the extent to which the candidate has met the objectives overall, and this might conceal weakness in some aspect of the examination which is balanced by superior performance in some other.

A **Grade A candidate** will be expected to:

- demonstrate a detailed knowledge and clear understanding of a range of sociological ideas, issues and information through logically structured narratives, description and argument
- apply sociological concepts and terms in the analysis and interpretation of data and in the development of simple explanations of social phenomena and processes
- demonstrate an awareness of the complexity of social life and that differing interpretations of social life are possible
- demonstrate the ability to comprehend, analyse and interpret a range of sociological evidence and theories
- show some awareness of the effect of values and perspectives or viewpoints on the interpretation of sociological data
- recognise the strengths and weaknesses of sociological evidence used for different purposes, particularly in terms of deficiencies and bias.

A **Grade C candidate** will be expected to:

- recall sufficient sociological information to present narratives or descriptions which show awareness, at a modest level, of the nature of specific sociological problems, issues and arguments, and to use sociological terms and concepts in such a way as to demonstrate an accurate but unsophisticated understanding of them
- demonstrate comprehension of a range of sociological material, and the ability to identify and analyse specific deficiencies in it, though without taking all aspects of the material into account
- reach basic conclusions based on a reasoned consideration of some of the available evidence and arguments.

A **Grade F candidate** will be expected to:

- recall a limited amount of relevant sociological knowledge, and demonstrate a basic understanding of sociological concepts and terms by the use of obvious examples and comparisons arranged coherently in a simple narrative
- show ability to comprehend straightforward sociological evidence, to make comparisons between different pieces of evidence, but without drawing any more than obvious conclusions from the evidence concerned.

5. Appendix

5.2 Reading list

Browne's 'An Introduction to Sociology' or **Moore's 'Sociology Alive!'** is suitable as a class text for this syllabus (see details below). This list was checked and revised in 2008 for the 2011 syllabus.

Books for Students

Author	Title	Date	Publisher	ISBN
Blundell, J.	Active Sociology for GCSE	2001	Longman	05382434432
Browne, K.	An Introduction to Sociology, 3rd Ed.	2005	Blackwell	0745632580
Moore, S.	Sociology Alive!, 3rd Ed.	2001	Nelson Thornes	0748754644
O'Donnell, G.	Mastering Sociology	2001	Palgrave	0333919564
Wilson, P. Kidd, A.	Sociology for GCSE	1998	HarperCollins	0003224449

Books for Teachers

Author	Title	Date	Publisher	ISBN
Barnard, A. Burgess, B. Kirby, M.	AS and A Level Sociology	2004	Cambridge University Press	0521532140
Bruce, S.	Sociology: A Very Short Introduction	2000	Oxford University Press	0192853805
Giddens, A.	Sociology, 5th Ed.	2006	Polity Press	074563379X
Lawson, T. Garrod, J.	The Complete A-Z Sociology Handbook	2003	Hodder & Stoughton	0340872705
McCoy, T. Mann, A.	Supporting Sociology Students	1995	Connect Publications	0952068311
Taylor, A., Richardson, J. et al.	Sociology in Focus	2004	Causeway Press	1873929218

5. Appendix

Websites

Office for National Statistics – e.g. search on 'Social Trends'	www.statistics.gov.uk .
United States Census Bureau	www.census.gov .
Association for the Teaching of the Social Sciences (ATSS)	www.le.ac.uk/se/centres/ATSS/atss.html .
New Internationalist – periodical	www.newint.org
Sociology Review - periodical aimed at schools	www.philipallan.co.uk
Sociology Online	www.sociologyonline.co.uk .
Sociology Web Links [University of Leicester]	www.le.ac.uk/education/centres/ATSS/sites.html
Sixth Sense – an interactive site for students including quizzes	http://sixthsense.osfc.ac.uk/
Tutor2u	http://tutor2u.net/sociology/gcse-sociology.html

5. Appendix

5.3 Teachers' notes

Cambridge O Level Sociology syllabus has a number of features, including the following:

- the syllabus content reflects contemporary developments in Sociology
- the syllabus content is focused and streamlined, with emphasis on themes that stretch across all areas of Sociology, such as research methods, social stratification, culture and socialisation
- the assessment for the syllabus consists of two written papers
- there is one compulsory question on research methods as part of Paper 1
- the syllabus is compatible with the GCE Advanced Subsidiary and Advanced Level (9699) syllabuses, as it is recognised that studying for the higher qualification will be seen as a logical progression for many of those candidates who are successful in the subject at O Level.

Topics that are popular with Centres – e.g. social differentiation and inequality, power and authority, deviance and social control – are included in the syllabus content. Moreover, the importance of studying concepts, theories and evidence, as a key to understanding the purpose and value of sociological investigation, is a central theme in the syllabus. The nature of the skills tested is clearly defined in the syllabus.

The syllabus content is divided into eight study units. The assessment consists of two written papers, each covering four study units.

Paper 1 includes a compulsory question on research methods and so it is strongly recommended that candidates are encouraged to develop a good understanding of the subject content outlined in **Unit One: Methodology**. Candidates should also study in detail at least **two** of the other three units that are examined in Paper 1.

For Paper 2, it is recommended that candidates study in detail at least **two** of the four units on which questions will be set. Studying fewer than the recommended number of units would disadvantage the candidate by restricting his/her choice of questions in the examination.

Each examination paper has its own format and Centres are advised to study the rubric requirements carefully and ensure that candidates are fully aware of these requirements before they sit the examination. Mock examinations based on the format and type of questions set in Papers 1 and 2, would be a useful way of preparing candidates for the examination.

This syllabus document includes a list of recommended reading. Ideally, candidates will have access to at least one of the textbooks listed. Other reading may be regarded as optional, although candidates may benefit from studying a range of research reports and other relevant sociological sources.

5. Appendix

Although global processes are an increasingly important theme in Sociology, it remains the case that much of the sociological literature focuses on the highly industrialised countries, the USA and UK in particular. While candidates for this examination are required to demonstrate a sound knowledge of these societies, they may also use relevant sociological examples and sources that relate to other parts of the world, including their own countries. Indeed, the use of more 'localised' sources is to be encouraged, particularly where it complements or supports references to important sociological themes and ideas.

University of Cambridge International Examinations
1 Hills Road, Cambridge, CB1 2EU, United Kingdom
Tel: +44 (0)1223 553554 Fax: +44 (0)1223 553558
Email: international@cie.org.uk Website: www.cie.org.uk

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