

Departmental Curriculum Statement

Sociology is a popular and vibrant A Level course. The department is particularly well resourced and offers a bespoke learning package to all students. Students are given access to both online and text based resources, along with revision seminars at venues around the North West. With ever increasing numbers, Sociology remains one of the most sought after qualifications as it offers insight into contemporary society and is relevant to changes happening in the postmodern world today. Over the last year, the crisis of the COVID pandemic has brought about unprecedented changes and has unsettled multiple areas of our lives. There has been an abundance of medical research about the effects of the virus and it is sociology which can allow us to understand the social and societal impact this has had. Studying areas such as class, poverty, health inequalities and crime allows us to begin to understand the devastating impact on our communities. COVID and other 'social tragedies' are not on the A Level curriculum, but through talking about such issues, students can start to see the world with a 'sociological eye'. The premise of A Level Sociology is to develop the students 'sociological imagination' and for them to understand the social world and our behaviour in it. The course follows the AQA syllabus with students studying the core topics of Education, Families, Crime and Deviance and Beliefs which are underpinned by key theoretical perspectives and methods, exploring issues such as inequality, the distribution and use of power and experiences of different social groups in society.

The course is designed to challenge student thinking and developing their understanding about how social processes and structures in society work and how societies influence us and shape our lives. The course is designed to be challenging but also contemporary, topical and relevant using documentaries and the news to make links with the theoretical content of the course.

Students are encouraged to develop their opinions along with their evaluative and critical skills. The course not only compliments a wide variety of other A levels choices offered at Cowley, it also provides a solid foundation for anyone seeking to study Sociology at university or enter the labour market. Many students go on to study Sociology at university and some have returned to speak to classes about their careers in areas such as probation, mental health services, the police and teaching. Sociology encourages tolerance and explores diversity, learning about choice and the fluid nature of changes within society. Sociology also develops transferable skills such as self-confidence, effective verbal and written communication, critical analysis, evaluation and an awareness of social, political and economic changes in society and their global impact.

Curriculum Implementation Statement

A Level Sociology is a two year course. Students come with no prior knowledge of the subject but do possess a number of transferable skills from their GCSEs. Essay writing, analysis and debating skills, for example, are developed over the two years. An engaging induction process allows students to see their potential in a subject that many will not have heard about before. In year one, students study the topics of Families and Households and Education with Research Methods. These topics engage students in theoretic debate while encouraging active involvement with the research process. They are also introduced to the Core Themes which underpin all areas of Sociology. In year two, the topics studied are Crime and Deviance and Beliefs In Society. Students will build upon the theories learned in Year one to study theoretical debate in more depth. Students develop assessment objective skills over the two year period. These include being able to demonstrate knowledge and understanding, applying their knowledge to a range of issues and to be able to analyse and evaluate effectively.

Lessons take various forms and can range from lecture style classes and exam skills sessions to seminar discussion groups. Students are expected to do some pre-reading before lessons and are given text books, revision guides and question banks at the start of each year. In addition, Year two students complete weekly retrieval quizzes to aid long term memory. The sociology department places a large emphasis on how to study independently and how to use effective revision techniques in order to achieve the best grades possible. These skills are continually reinforced both in the class room – with the use of display- and in the study area through the help of our study support expert.

Sociology is an inclusive A Level. Standard college entry requirements are used and some students places are offered to students re-sitting English and Maths GCSEs. The subject teacher is also an English teacher and the overlap helps students develop essay writing techniques. It is a subject designed to prepare its students for a wide range of occupations and further study.

Curriculum Beyond the Classroom

The department attends the Tutor2U Grande Booster Workshop annually. This intensive revision day is invaluable for students as it covers key exam skills and is delivered by examiners.

We have worked closely with Merseyside Police and have had officers come in to lessons to discuss issues such as domestic violence, control and punishment and stop and search.

Social Media is a large tool used in the department for keeping up-to-date with the most recent initiatives and for students to engage in debate around news items.

Subject Expertise

The Sociology Department communicates with students in a variety of ways. One example is the @SociologyCowley Twitter page. It is used to interact with students, to share relevant news items, revision tips and examples of good practice. It is also an invaluable CPD tool to continually develop the expertise of the teaching staff. In addition to that, students are encouraged to use the college email system to reach out to tutors and to seek help where needed. The department has links with a large number of professionals and teaching bodies. This keeps us up-to-date with new initiatives and teaching ideas. It has also allowed the department to be in contact with other colleges and practitioners. The department uses Tutor2U resources and is in contact with employees and examiners of Sociology. In addition, we are keen to collaborate with educators so that teaching practice is the most up-to-date and research led.

Destinations

Sociology provides an excellent starting point for any Social Science degree from Economics, Psychology, and Politics to Criminology and Philosophy.

Many students choose degrees which combine Sociology with Psychology as the two subjects complement one another. While Sociology studies the influences society has upon individual behaviour, Psychology examines the impact of the individual mind.

Another popular combined degree is the study of Sociology with Criminology. While Sociology covers the study of crime, Criminology goes into greater depth thereby making the two subjects an ideal combination.

A degree in Sociology can lead to many career options including teaching, advertising, research, the police force, marketing, social work and business. Sociology is an academic subject teaching you transferable skills.

In recent years we have had students going on to work in the Prison Service and Mental Health.

The Sociology department has been involved in joint curriculum delivery with Psychology for student taster days. This has been beneficial for helping students with their choices and for promoting links between the two.