

WJEC GCSE Social Studies

Approved by Qualifications Wales
Specification

Teaching from 2026
For award from 2028

Version 2 October 2025



This Qualifications Wales regulated qualification
is not available to centres in England.

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Ready for the world.

This specification meets the requirements of the following regulatory documents published by Qualifications Wales:

- [Made for Wales GCSE Qualification Approval Criteria](#) which set out requirements for any new GCSE qualification Approved for first teaching from September 2025 and beyond.
- [Standard Conditions of Recognition](#) which contains the rules that all awarding bodies and their qualifications must meet when offering qualifications to learners in Wales.
- [Approval Criteria for GCSE Social Studies](#) which sets out the subject specific requirements for GCSE Social Studies from September 2025 and beyond.

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SUMMARY OF AMENDMENTS

Version	Description	Page number
2	<p>3.2.5 amended</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• replaced Bleddyn Lake to Alex Griffiths• added 'y' to Zoe (Allen)	26

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GCSE SOCIAL STUDIES

SUMMARY OF ASSESSMENT

Unit 1: Society and Social Issues

Written examination: 1 hour 15 minutes

30% of qualification

60 marks

Questions requiring objective responses, short and extended answers, with some based around applied situations.

Unit 2: Investigating Society and Social Issues

Non-examination assessment: 6 hours and 30 minutes

20% of qualification

60 marks

Set and marked by WJEC.

The assessment will feature data sources tasks based on a selected social issue which will be set by WJEC each year.

Unit 3: Social Change in Contemporary Society

Written examination: 1 hour 15 minutes

30% of qualification

60 marks

Questions requiring objective responses, short and extended answers, with some based around applied situations.

Unit 4: Planning to Effect Social Change

Non-examination assessment: 6 hours and 30 minutes

20% of qualification

60 marks

Set by WJEC, marked by the Centre and moderated by WJEC.

The brief and tasks will be static for the lifetime of the qualification.

This is a unitised qualification.

It is not tiered.

Aside from Unit 1, which is an introductory unit, and Unit 4, which is a synoptic unit, there is no hierarchy implied by the order in which the two other units are presented. Therefore, the order does not imply a prescribed teaching order.

Units 1-3 will be available from 2027, with Unit 4 available in 2028.

The first award of the qualification will be 2028.

Qualification Approval Number: C00/5167/4

GCSE SOCIAL STUDIES

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Aims

GCSE Social Studies supports learners to:

- develop an understanding of how to become ethical, informed and responsible citizens of Wales and the world
- develop a greater understanding of the world and of other people and their values
- engage with contemporary social issues, and explore identity, rights and democracy
- explore social issues and consider how to actively participate and engage in social action
- appreciate the complex, pluralistic and diverse nature of society by understanding identity, rights and responsibilities, equality and inequality, and how these issues shape people, places and community
- reflect on the influence of governance on people, places and community
- explore the cross-cutting theme of human rights and diversity, including Black, Asian, and minority ethnic perspectives, identity, culture and contributions.

These aims are set out in Qualifications Wales' Approval Criteria.

The GCSE Social Studies qualification will be based on the following concepts:

- authority and governance
- cause and effect
- change and continuity
- citizenship
- community
- diversity
- identity and belonging
- interconnectedness
- justice and equality
- responsibility
- rights
- social action.

Therefore, Social Studies is about:

- understanding the various dimensions under which human societies have, and can be, understood and explained such as the personal, the local, the national, the international
- understanding the various social issues that exist in Wales and internationally
- appreciating that social issues are complex and can be explained from various perspectives
- understanding that societies change, what causes those changes and what we as members of society can do to promote change in our society through legal, non-violent social action.

1.2 Curriculum for Wales

This GCSE Social Studies qualification is underpinned by the Curriculum for Wales framework and has been designed to ensure that learners can continue to make progress towards the four purposes whilst studying for this qualification. Central to this design are the [principles of progression](#), along with the [statements of what matters](#) and those [subject specific skills and concepts](#) outlined in the '[Designing your Curriculum](#)' section of the Humanities Area of Learning and Experiences.

In developing this qualification, we have considered where there are opportunities to embed the cross-curricular themes and where there are opportunities for integral skills and cross-curricular skills to be developed. Appendix A provides a simple mapping, and information to support teachers will be provided in the Guidance for Teaching.

We have also considered where the qualification can generate opportunities for integrating the learning experiences noted in 'Opportunities for integration of learning experiences' on page 29; the Guidance for Teaching will include further information on integrating these learning experiences into delivery.

The GCSE Social Studies qualification supports the Curriculum for Wales by:

- supporting the statements of what matters¹ by encouraging learners to:
 - ask increasingly sophisticated enquiry questions
 - demonstrate greater independence in finding suitable information, making informed predictions and hypotheses, and making judgements
 - become more able to effectively work with others, especially, but not limited to, taking part in social action
 - increase their breadth and depth of knowledge and underlying concepts
 - develop an understanding of themselves in the world
 - demonstrate an ability to work with an increasing number and sophistication of sources of information, and a growing understanding of how to resolve contradictory or conflicting accounts
 - continually refine and develop a growing sophistication of key disciplinary skills, including those relating to enquiry such as framing questions and using evidence to construct and support an answer, and relating that to representation and interpretation of enquiry results
 - demonstrate a growing ability to transfer existing skills and knowledge into new, and increasingly unfamiliar contexts
 - demonstrate a greater ability to influence events by exercising informed and responsible citizenship.
- supporting the subject specific considerations for Social Studies² by:
 - developing an understanding of the discipline and its value
 - encouraging conceptual understanding of the world by learning about people and their values, in different times, places and circumstances
 - providing rich contexts to explore social issues, identity, rights and responsibilities, and social organisation
 - encouraging active participation and engagement with social issues through social enquiry, discussions and social action
 - developing an understanding of how systems of government in Wales operate and affect people's lives, and how they compare with other systems
 - exploring the concepts of governance, rights, equality, inequality, ethnicity, gender and poverty.

¹ <https://hwb.gov.wales/curriculum-for-wales/humanities/statements-of-what-matters/>

² <https://hwb.gov.wales/curriculum-for-wales/humanities/designing-your-curriculum/#specific-considerations-for-this-area>
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1.3 Prior learning and progression

Although there is no specific requirement for prior learning, the qualification is designed primarily for learners between the ages of 14 and 16 and builds on the conceptual understanding learners have developed through their learning from ages 3–14.

The qualification allows learners to develop a strong foundation of knowledge, skills and understanding which supports progression to post-16 study and prepares learners for life, learning and work. The qualification provides a suitable foundation for the study of Government and Politics, Law, Psychology and Sociology at either AS or A level. In addition, the specification provides a coherent, satisfying and worthwhile course of study for learners who do not progress to further study in this subject.

1.4 Guided learning hours

GCSE Social Studies has been designed to be delivered within 120–140 guided learning hours. The qualification has been primarily designed as a 2-year programme for learners in years 10 and 11.

1.5 Use of language

As our understanding of diversity, equity, and inclusion evolves, so must our language. Updated terminology better reflects individual identities and fosters respect and accuracy. Language used should be specific as possible. Staying informed and adaptable is crucial, as inclusive language promotes dignity and equity. Recognising that language will continue to evolve, we will remain open to further amendments to ensure it accurately represents and supports all individuals. WJEC will inform centres of any amendments and the most up to date version of the specification will always be on the website.

1.6 Equality and fair access

The specification may be followed by any learner, irrespective of gender, ethnic, religious or cultural background. It has been designed to avoid, where possible, features that could, without justification, make it more difficult for a learner to access and achieve because they have a particular protected characteristic.

The protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 are age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

Access arrangements and reasonable adjustments are made for eligible learners to enable them to access the assessments and demonstrate their knowledge and skills without changing the demands of the assessment.

Information on access arrangements and reasonable adjustments is found in the following document from the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ): Access Arrangements, Reasonable Adjustments: General and Vocational Qualifications. This document is available on the JCQ website (www.jcq.org.uk).

We will be following the principles set out in this document and, as a consequence of provision for reasonable adjustments, very few learners will encounter a complete barrier to any part of the assessment.

2 SUBJECT CONTENT

How to read the amplification

The amplification provided in the right-hand column uses the following four stems:

- ‘Learners should be aware of’ is used when learners do not need to understand all aspects of the specified content in detail. Teachers should refer to Guidance for Teaching documents for further guidance on the depth and breadth to which this content should be taught.
- ‘Learners should know’ is used when learners are required to demonstrate basic knowledge and understanding.
- ‘Learners should understand’ is used when learners are required to demonstrate greater depth of knowledge and understanding, application of knowledge to familiar or unfamiliar contexts and analysis and evaluation of information for a given purpose.
- ‘Learners should be able to’ is used when learners need to apply their knowledge and understanding to a practical situation or demonstrate application of practical skills and techniques.

The use of the word ‘including’ indicates that the specified content must be taught and could be subject to assessment.

The use of the words ‘for example’ or ‘such as’ indicates that the specified content is for guidance only, and alternative examples could be chosen.

Unit 1

Society and Social Issues

Written examination

30% of qualification

60 marks

Overview of unit

This unit is focused on introducing learners to the idea of society and what this means, and how this can be explored through various concepts and levels, for example the local, national and international.

The purpose of this unit is to explore:

- a variety of ways that societies can be explained and understood
- how societies’ norms and values are transmitted and maintained through socialisation
- the ideas of identity, rights, responsibilities and diversity within society
- social institutions and various levels of governance in Wales, the United Kingdom and the wider world that influence how societies function
- social issues, examining how they are explained, measured and caused, the groups affected by them and their impact on individuals.

Areas of content**1.1 Understanding society**

In this topic learners will gain knowledge, understanding and skills in the following areas:

- 1.1.1** Understanding societies
- 1.1.2** Understanding and transforming data about society
- 1.1.3** Understanding sustainability in society
- 1.1.4** Understanding socialisation in society
- 1.1.5** Understanding diversity in Wales

Section	Amplification
1.1.1 Understanding societies	<p>Learners should know what is meant by the terms:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • community • culture • intercultural • intracultural • norms • social cohesion • social control • social exclusion • society • subculture • values. <p>Learners should understand types of societal variations found in societies, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • collectivist vs individualistic • homogenous vs heterogenous/pluralistic • open vs closed. <p>Learners should understand types of economic variations found in societies, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • command economies • market economies • mixed economies • traditional economies. <p>Learners should understand types of authority and governance found in societies, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • democracies • monarchies • authoritarian/totalitarian • tribal/traditional.
1.1.2 Understanding and transforming data about society	<p>Learners should understand how to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • draw conclusions from quantitative and qualitative data on society • identify patterns and trends in data on society • identify weaknesses in the presentation of data on society • interpret and extract information on a range of data sources on society.

	<p>Learners should understand how to calculate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • mean • median • mode • percentages • range. <p>Learners should understand how to construct appropriate graphs to transform data, using appropriate scales and labels, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • bar charts • line graphs • pie charts (labelling only) • scatter graphs.
<p>1.1.3 Understanding sustainability in society</p>	<p>Learners should be aware of the:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 17 sustainable development goals in Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (United Nations, 2016) • aims of the Anti-Racist Wales Action plan (Welsh Government, 2022) 2024 • seven goals of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act (Welsh Government, 2015). <p>Learners should understand the aims of the three pillars of sustainability in society:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • social • economic • environmental.
<p>1.1.4 Understanding socialisation in society</p>	<p>Learners should know what is meant by the terms:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • socialisation • primary socialisation • secondary socialisation. <p>Learners should understand how agents of socialisation work to pass on culture and identity to individuals, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • family • education • peers • media. <p>Learners should understand how socialisation techniques can be used by agents of socialisation to pass on culture and identity, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • negative sanctions • positive sanctions • the use of role models.
<p>1.1.5 Understanding diversity in Wales</p>	<p>Learners should know features of diversity in contemporary Wales, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • age • disability • education • employment • ethnicity

- gender identity
- household
- income
- language
- national identity
- religion
- sex
- sexual orientation.

Learners should understand diversity in Wales, including:

- patterns within contemporary Wales
- trends within Wales over the last 100 years.

1.2 Political institutions, participation and rights and responsibilities of citizens in Wales and the World

In this topic learners will gain knowledge, understanding and skills in the following areas:

1.2.1 Political institutions

1.2.2 Political participation opportunities

1.2.3 Rights and responsibilities

Section	Amplification
1.2.1 Political institutions	<p>Learners should understand the structure and function of the following institutions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> unitary (local) authorities Senedd Cymru UK Parliament North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) United Nations (UN). <p>They should further understand:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the connections between these institutions how each of these institutions impact on the lives of the people of Wales.
1.2.2 Political participation opportunities	<p>Learners should understand political participation opportunities, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> elections (local, Senedd Cymru, UK Parliament) referenda political parties pressure groups unions.
1.2.3 Rights and responsibilities	<p>Learners should be aware of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the rights and responsibilities that are part of being an individual living in Wales acts and agreements relating to human rights, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Universal Declaration of Human Rights (United Nations, 1948) European Convention on Human Rights (Council of Europe, 1950) Convention on the Rights of the Child (United Nations, 1989) Human Rights Act (UK Parliament, 1998). <p>Learners should understand the following rights and responsibilities of citizens in Wales, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> right to life; responsibility: not to harm or endanger other people's lives right to be protected from discrimination; responsibility: not to discriminate against each other right to freedom of expression; responsibility: not to use hateful or derogatory language about an individual/group in society right to education; responsibility: to attend school right to privacy; responsibility: not to access, or make public, private information.

1.3 Social issues in Wales and the World

In this topic learners will gain knowledge, understanding and skills in the following areas:

- 1.3.1 Social Issues
- 1.3.2 Homelessness
- 1.3.3 Digital exclusion
- 1.3.4 Environmental inequality

Section	Amplification
1.3.1 Social issues	<p>Learners should understand the characteristics of social issues, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • deviation from the norms in society • possibility of different impacts on different individuals • recognised as being harmful to individuals, society or the physical world • solved through action, regulation or resources • possibility of an impact on equality
1.3.2 Homelessness	<p>Learners should know:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • what is meant by the term 'homelessness' • the rate of homelessness in Wales. <p>Learners should understand the causes of homelessness, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • lack of affordable housing • unemployment • life events • mental health problems. <p>Learners should understand the impact of homelessness on individuals, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • mental health • physical health • safety • inability to access society. <p>Learners should understand overrepresented characteristics in the homeless population, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • age • disability • education • ethnicity • sexual orientation. <p>Learners should understand difficulties faced when researching homelessness.</p> <p>Learners should understand the role of organisations in society that aim to reduce homelessness, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • charities • local authorities • Senedd Cymru.

	<p>Learners should understand homelessness in other societies, specifically Argentina and Norway, and how homelessness in these countries compares to Wales.</p>
<p>1.3.3 Digital exclusion</p>	<p>Learners should know:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • what is meant by the term 'digital exclusion' • the rate of digital exclusion in Wales. <p>Learners should understand:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the causes of digital exclusion, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • access to broadband (infrastructure and cost) • concerns about online safety and security • disability • lack of digital skills. <p>Learners should understand the impact of digital exclusion on individuals, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • communicating • employability • managing information • transactions (shopping and services). <p>Learners should understand overrepresented characteristics in the digitally excluded population, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • age • disability • ethnicity • economic activity status • living in rural areas • users for whom English is not their first language. <p>Learners should understand difficulties faced when researching digital exclusion.</p> <p>Learners should understand the role of organisations in society that aim to reduce digital exclusion, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • charities • Senedd Cymru • telecommunications companies. <p>Learners should understand digital exclusion in other societies, specifically South Africa and South Korea, and how digital exclusion in these countries compares to Wales.</p>

1.3.4**Environmental inequality**

Learners should know:

- what is meant by the term 'environmental inequality'
- examples of environmental inequality in Wales.

Learners should understand the causes of environmental inequality, including:

- the location of infrastructure
- exclusion from environmental decision making
- socioeconomic deprivation
- unequal distribution of the positive and negative benefits of infrastructure.

Learners should understand the impact of environmental inequality on individuals, including:

- mental health
- physical health
- local physical environment.

Learners should understand overrepresented characteristics in populations affected by environmental inequality, including:

- age
- disability
- economic activity status
- ethnicity.

Learners should understand difficulties faced when researching environmental inequality.

Learners should understand the role of organisations in society that aim to reduce environmental inequality, including:

- charities
- Senedd Cymru
- UK regulatory bodies.

Learners should understand environmental inequality in other societies, specifically the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and Germany, and how environmental inequality in these countries compares to Wales.

Unit 2

Investigating Society and Social Issues

Non-examination assessment

Set and marked by WJEC

20% of qualification

60 marks

Overview of unit

This unit is focused on introducing learners to concepts and techniques necessary to investigate society and social issues appropriately. It aims to give learners an opportunity to practise applying these concepts and techniques in response to a contemporary social issue.

The purpose of this unit is to:

- explore methods for researching society and social issues and appreciate the impact these methods may have on our understanding of social issues
- expose learners to a variety of evidence sources relating to society and social issues and enable them to assess the credibility of evidence sources and viewpoints
- empower learners to be able to draw conclusions from qualitative and quantitative data about social issues.

Areas of content

2.1 Exploring sources	
In this topic learners will gain knowledge, understanding and skills in the following areas:	
2.1.1 Understanding sources	Amplification
2.1.1 Understanding sources	<p>Learners should know the features of different sources, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> quantitative qualitative factual opinion formal informal persuasive. <p>Learners should be able to summarise the main points raised about a social issue from a variety of sources.</p>
2.1.2 Assessing the credibility of sources	<p>Learners should be able to assess the credibility of sources, considering aspects such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> accuracy authority of author currency potential bias purpose.

2.2 Researching social issues

In this topic learners will gain knowledge, understanding and skills in the following areas:

2.2.1 Methods of investigating social issues

2.2.2 Data collection devices

2.2.3 Sampling

2.2.4 Ethics and managing risk

Section	Amplification
2.2.1 Methods of investigating social issues	<p>Learners should be able to select and explain their use of methods to conduct research into social issues, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> interviews (structured, semi-structured, unstructured) overt observation (participant or non-participant) questionnaires. <p>Learners should understand the strengths and weaknesses of the above methods of investigating social issues.</p>
2.2.2 Data collection devices	<p>Learners should be able to create an appropriate data collection device, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> questionnaires <ul style="list-style-type: none"> closed (direct) questions open (indirect) questions rating or Likert scale questions interviews <ul style="list-style-type: none"> direct (closed) questions indirect (open) questions follow-up questions probing questions overt observations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> behaviour categories/checklist sampling schedules (time point, time interval, event). <p>Learners should understand the strengths and weaknesses of the above data collection devices.</p>
2.2.3 Sampling	<p>Learners should understand the importance of obtaining representative samples.</p> <p>Learners should be able to select and use appropriate sampling techniques, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> opportunity random snowball volunteer quota. <p>Learners should be able to select and justify:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> sample size sample characteristics sampling technique.

2.2.4**Ethics and managing risk**

Learners should understand:

- ethical issues affecting research including:
 - confidentiality
 - harm to participants
 - valid consent
 - privacy
- strategies used by researchers to address the above ethical issues.

Learners should be able to:

- use strategies to address ethical issues in their research
- recognise what safety risks need consideration when conducting research and suggest strategies that will reduce these risks.

2.3 Communicating social issues

In this topic learners will gain knowledge, understanding and skills in the following areas:

2.3.1 Displaying data about a social issue

2.3.2 Creating an artefact to communicate data about a social issue

Section	Amplification
2.3.1 Displaying data about a social issue	<p>Learners should be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> undertake calculations on raw data, for example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> mean median mode percentages range select appropriate methods of displaying data based on the nature of the data collected, for example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> quantitative or qualitative data categories or continuous correlation or difference create examples of appropriate methods of displaying data, for example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> bar charts histograms infographics line graphs pie charts scatter graphs word clouds draw conclusions from displayed data.
2.3.2 Creating an artefact to communicate data about a social issue	<p>Learners should be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> create an artefact to communicate information gained from sources and primary data collection, for example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> an email an online article/blog post a research poster a speech ensure the artefact: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> follows an appropriate format features effective communication reflects the given sources reflects the primary data collection.

Unit 3

Social Change in Contemporary Society

Written examination
30% of qualification
60 marks

Overview of unit

This unit is focused on introducing learners to the idea of social change. It aims to study social change as a process, but also to examine the role individuals and movements can have on social change.

The purpose of this unit is to explore:

- the features of social change and examples of how societies can change
- various factors that can lead to social change
- the impact of social change and how it can have a negative and/or positive effect on societies and the individuals within them
- examples of individuals and social movements that have contributed to social change.

Areas of content

3.1 Social change	
Section	Amplification
3.1.1 Exploring data on changing societies	<p>In this topic learners will gain knowledge, understanding and skills in the following areas:</p> <p>3.1.1 Exploring data on changing societies 3.1.2 Different types of society 3.1.3 Features of social change 3.1.4 Causes of social change 3.1.5 Impacts of social change 3.1.6 Globalisation as an overarching example of social change around the world</p> <p>Section</p> <p>3.1.1 Exploring data on changing societies</p> <p>Learners should understand how to use a range of raw data/count sources that show changes in societies.</p> <p>Learners should understand how to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> draw conclusions from quantitative and qualitative data about the changes in societies identify patterns and trends in data about the changes in societies identify weaknesses in the presentation of data about the changes in societies interpret and extract information about changes in societies. <p>Learners will need to use the learning from <i>section 1.1.2: Understanding and transforming data about society</i> to explore data on changing societies effectively.</p>
3.1.2 Different types of society	<p>Learners should understand the features of different types of societies, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> hunter-gatherer feudal industrialist post industrialist.

<p>3.1.3 Features of social change</p>	<p>Learners should understand the key features of social change, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • gradual change • incremental process • moderate impact • progressive social change • regressive social change. <p>Learners should understand how social change is different to social transformation, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the speed of change and transformation • the process of change and transformation • the impact of change and transformation. <p>Learners should understand behaviours and psychological processes that can bring about social change at an individual level, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • drawing attention to an issue • consistency • commitment • flexibility • identification • cognitive conflict • deeper processing • conversion. <p>Learners should understand:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • how social cryptomnesia contributes to social change • how the snowball effect contributes to social change.
<p>3.1.4 Causes of social change</p>	<p>Learners should know categories of social change, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • cultural • demographic • economic • environmental • political/legal • technological. <p>Learners should understand how cultural factors contribute to social change, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • contagious diffusion • hierarchical diffusion • relocation diffusion. <p>Learners should understand how demographic factors contribute to social change, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • age and gender distribution • birth, life expectancy and mortality rates • population size (increase and decrease). <p>Learners should understand how economic factors contribute to social change, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • cost of living/inflation • employment rates

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • wealth distribution. <p>Learners should understand how environmental factors contribute to social change, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • climate change • resource availability • urbanisation/land use. <p>Learners should understand how political/legal factors contribute to social change, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • devolution • changing political ideologies • judicial decisions and precedents. <p>Learners should understand how technological factors contribute to social change, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • innovations in communication • innovations in healthcare • innovations in the workplace. <p>Learners should be aware of examples from Wales, the UK or the wider world that illustrate the factors above.</p>
<p>3.1.5 Impacts of social change</p>	<p>Learners should understand the positive and/or negative impact that social change can have on the following aspects of society:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • cultural and social cohesion • environmental sustainability • equality • human patterns and structures • living standards • political stability. <p>Learners should be aware of examples from Wales, the UK or the wider world that illustrate the impacts above.</p>
<p>3.1.6 Globalisation as an overarching example of social change around the world</p>	<p>Learners should know what is meant by the term:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • globalisation. <p>Learners should understand:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • how globalisation is an example of interconnection across the world • that globalisation can cause both progressive and regressive social change. <p>Learners should understand cultural factors that help and hinder globalisation, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • consumer goods; shared global experiences • cultural protectionism; language barriers. <p>Learners should understand economic factors that help and hinder globalisation, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • containerisation; transnational corporations • tariffs; sanctions.

Learners should understand environmental factors that help and hinder globalisation, including:

- access to natural resources; global environmental agreements
- environmental protectionism; resource depletion.

Learners should understand political/legal factors that help and hinder globalisation, including:

- the growth of international governance; trade agreements
- nationalism: social movements that challenge globalisation.

Learners should understand technological factors that help and hinder globalisation, including:

- the 'death of distance' caused by the Internet; the language translation apps
- cyber-attacks; access to appropriate technology.

Learners should be aware of examples from Wales, the UK or the wider world that illustrate the factors above.

3.2 Social movements

In this topic learners will gain knowledge, understanding and skills in the following areas:

- 3.2.1 Characteristics of social movements
- 3.2.2 Aberle's categorisation of social movements
- 3.2.3 Stages in social movements
- 3.2.4 The impact of social movements in creating social change
- 3.2.5 Social change makers

Section	Amplification
3.2.1 Characteristics of social movements	<p>Learners should be aware of the history of social movements as a means of social change.</p> <p>Learners should know what is meant by the term 'social movement'.</p> <p>Learners should understand characteristics of a social movement, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • bottom-up • coordination of activities • collective faith in social change • commitment to a 'common goal' • semiformal structure • conservative or innovative.
3.2.2 Aberle's categorisation of social movements	<p>Learners should understand Aberle's categorisation of social movements, including the 'who' and 'how much' categorisation of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • alternative social movements • redemptive social movements • reformative social movements • revolutionary social movements.
3.2.3 Stages in social movements	<p>Learners should understand stages of social movements, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • preliminary • coalescence • institutionalization • decline.
3.2.4 The impact of social movements in creating social change	<p>Learners should know about the social change sought by social movements, including the:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • anti-apartheid movement • environmental movement • feminist (also known as Women's Liberation) movement • LGBTQIA+³ movement • Welsh language movement. <p>Learners should understand the impact of social movements, including the:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • anti-apartheid movement • environmental movement • feminist (also known as Women's Liberation) movement

³ Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer/Questioning, Intersex, and Asexual/Agender/Aromantic. The "+" represents the many other identities that may be part of the community, such as pansexual, non-binary, gender fluid, and allies.
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• LGBTQIA+ movement• Welsh language movement.
3.2.5 Social change makers	<p>Learners should know of the aim, actions and impact of social changemakers from Wales, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Hanef Bhamjee (anti-apartheid movement)• Alex Griffiths (environmental movement)• Zoey Allen (LGBTQIA+ movement)• Margaret Haig-Thomas (feminist movement)• Eileen and Trefor Beasley (Welsh language movement).

Unit 4

Planning to Effect Social Change

Non-examination assessment

Set by WJEC, marked by centre and moderated by WJEC

20% of qualification

60 marks

Overview of unit

This unit is focused on encouraging learners to examine a social issue that is important to them and then plan a legal, non-violent social action that they believe could initiate the process of social change.

The purpose of this unit is to:

- identify and engage with social issues
- explore various viewpoints relating to social issues
- explore examples and methods of social action
- understand how to plan for a social action
- understand methods for conducting analysis into the effectiveness of social action.

Areas of content

4.1 Social action	
In this topic learners will gain knowledge, understanding and skills in the following areas:	
4.1.1 Understanding social action	Section
4.1.2 Methods of social action	Amplification
4.1.3 Evaluating methods of social action	<p>Learners should understand:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • what is meant by the term 'social action', including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • creating positive change in communities • not for profit • practical action undertaken by individuals or groups of people. <p>Learners should be able to propose a social issue that requires social action by considering:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • secondary sources that are fully referenced • the impact of the issue on a community • the desired change that could be brought about by social action.
4.1.2 Methods of social action	<p>Learners should understand legal and non-violent methods of social action including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • arts and music (such as theatre productions) • economic activism (such as boycotting goods and services) • fundraising (such as organising charity events) • individual activities (such as volunteering) • peaceful protest (such as marches) • petitioning (such as creating online petitions)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> political action (such as contacting elected representative) social media (such as producing and sharing content) writing and publishing (such as writing blog posts).
4.1.3 Evaluating methods of social action	<p>Learners should be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> evaluate methods of social action for specific social issues using different criteria, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> accessibility for different groups in society cost ease of implementation and of measuring impact likely impact on different groups in society longevity suitability for different social issues time to implement. select and justify an appropriate method of social action for a specific social issue by considering: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the most valid action for the issue their individual strengths and skills.

4.2 Planning for social action

In this topic learners will gain knowledge, understanding and skills in the following areas:

4.2.1 Creating a social action plan

Section	Amplification
4.2.1 Creating a social action plan	<p>Learners should be able to create a social action plan, by considering:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> aims and goals tools and resources required budget key stakeholders, supporters and volunteers a plan of the key actions required.

4.3 Analysing the effectiveness of social action

In this topic learners will gain knowledge, understanding and skills in the following areas:

4.3.1 Gathering feedback on a planned social action

4.3.2 Drawing conclusions about the effectiveness of planned social action

Section	Amplification
4.3.1 Gathering feedback on a planned social action	<p>Learners should understand different methods of gathering feedback, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • questionnaires • interviews • focus groups. <p>Learners should be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • select an appropriate method of gathering feedback on a planned social action • collect appropriate data • display data in appropriate formats.
4.3.2 Drawing conclusions about the effectiveness of planned social action	<p>Learners should be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • analyse data from feedback on planned methods of social action • make reasoned judgements on the effectiveness of planned methods of social action based on the data analysed • propose changes needed to the social action plan.

Opportunities for integration of learning experiences

GCSE Social Studies generates opportunities for the following learning experiences to be developed (experiences will not be directly assessed):

- develop empathy, tolerance, and compassion through the study of different and diverse contexts and perspectives
- develop confidence in articulating and reflecting on their own views, understanding their capacity to change
- consider their rights and how these rights can be exercised, constrained, and defended
- engage in collaborative working.

The Guidance for Teaching will include further information on the opportunities provided by the qualification for teachers/centres to integrate these learning experiences and skills into delivery.

For opportunities to develop cross-cutting themes, cross-curricular skills and integral skills please see Appendix A.

3 ASSESSMENT

The Assessment Pack will include all detailed information relating to assessment.

3.1 Assessment Objectives and Weightings

Below are the assessment objectives for this specification. Learners must:

AO1

Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of change, concepts, issues, processes, structures and terms relevant to the study of society.

AO2

Apply knowledge and understanding of change, concepts, issues, methods, processes, structures and terms relevant to the study of society, to different contexts.

AO3

Analyse, evaluate, or make judgements on change, concepts, debates, issues, methods, processes and structures or source materials, relevant to the study of society.

AO4

Select, use, and apply skills and techniques in practice to undertake enquiries relevant to the study of society.

The table below shows the weighting of each assessment objective for each unit and for the qualification as a whole.

	AO1	AO2	AO3	AO4	Total
Unit 1	15%	10%	5%	-	30%
Unit 2	-	4%	4%	12%	20%
Unit 3	10%	10%	10%	-	30%
Unit 4	-	0%	6%	14%	20%
Overall weighting	25%	24%	25%	26%	100%

3.2 Arrangements for non-examination assessment

Unit 2: Overview

The assignment, which includes data sources and several tasks, will be issued to centres in an Assessment Pack via the WJEC Portal in the September of the first year. Tasks are not intended to change for the lifetime of the qualification. The social issue will change annually. Centres have the flexibility to decide when during the year learners undertake the assignment. However, it is important that centres use the data sources from the year that they plan to submit the work for marking as this may be different to the year that the candidates undertake the assessment.

This assessment contributes to 20% of the overall qualification grade and will take 6 hours 30 minutes for candidates to complete the tasks. The assignment could be completed in one sitting, or in multiple, shorter sessions. The tasks will be marked out of a total of 60 marks.

This unit will be assessed through an externally set assignment and will be set and marked by WJEC. Assessments must be submitted digitally (they may be handwritten and scanned or completed digitally).

Unit 4: Overview

For this assessment learners are required to consider how they could plan for social action on a social issue that affects a community.

The assignment, which will include a brief and several tasks will be issued to centres in an Assessment pack via the WJEC Portal. Tasks are not intended to change for the lifetime of the qualification. If candidates choose to resit this unit at a later date, they must choose another social issue and social action to explore. Centres have the flexibility to decide when, during the assessment year, learners undertake the assignment.

This assessment contributes to 20% of the overall qualification grade and will take 6 hours and 30 minutes to complete. The assignment could be completed in one sitting, or in multiple, shorter sessions. The assignment will be marked out of a total of 60 marks.

This unit will be assessed through an externally set assignment and will be marked by the centre and moderated by WJEC. Assessments must be submitted digitally (they may be handwritten and scanned or completed digitally).

4 MALPRACTICE

Before the course starts, the teacher is responsible for informing candidates of WJEC's regulations concerning malpractice. Candidates must not take part in any unfair practice in the preparation of work for GCSE Social Studies.

Information regarding malpractice is available in our [Guide to preventing, reporting and investigating malpractice](#).

All cases of suspected or actual malpractice must be reported immediately to WJEC (malpractice@wjec.co.uk). If candidates commit malpractice, they may be penalised or disqualified from the examinations.

In all cases of malpractice, centres are advised to consult the JCQ booklet [Suspected Malpractice: Policies and Procedures](#).

5 TECHNICAL INFORMATION

5.1 Entries and awards

This is a unitised qualification. Learners are entered for each unit separately.

Assessment opportunities will be available in the summer assessment period each year, until the end of the life of the specification.

Unit 1, Unit 2 and Unit 3 will be available in 2027 (and each year thereafter). Unit 4 will be available in 2028 (and each year thereafter) and the qualification will be awarded for the first time in summer 2028.

Pre-16 candidates (i.e. candidates who are under 16 on 31st August in the academic year in which they were entered)

The terminal rule is set at 40% of the overall qualification for GCSE Social Studies.

If the assessment being re-taken contributes to the 40% terminal rule requirement, the mark for the new assessment will count regardless of previous results in that assessment.

Candidates may resit an individual unit once only. The better uniform mark score from the two attempts will be used in calculating the final overall grade subject to the terminal rule being satisfied first i.e. that candidates must complete a minimum amount of the assessment for a qualification in the series in which they are cashing-in.

If any unit has been attempted twice and a candidate wishes to enter the unit for the third time, the candidate will have to re-enter all units and the appropriate cash-in(s). This is referred to as a 'fresh start'. When retaking a qualification (fresh start), a candidate may have up to two attempts at each unit. However, no results from examination units taken prior to the fresh start can be used in aggregating the new grade(s).

If a candidate has been entered for but is absent for a unit, the absence does not count as an attempt. The candidate would, however, qualify as a resit candidate in the final resit series.

Marks for non-examination assessment may be used for the life of the specification.

Post-16 Candidates (i.e. candidates who are 16 or over on 1st September in the academic year in which they are entered)

There is no terminal rule that applies to Post-16 Candidates for GCSE Social Studies.

There is no limit on the number of times a candidate can resit an individual unit; however, the better uniform mark score from the most two recent attempts will be used in calculating the final overall grade.

The 'fresh start' rule does not apply to post-16 candidates.

If a candidate has been entered for but is absent for a unit, the absence does not count as an attempt. The candidate would, however, qualify as a resit candidate in the final resit series.

Marks for non-examination assessment may be used for the life of the specification.

The entry codes appear below.

		Entry codes	
		English medium	Welsh medium
Unit 1	Society and Social Issues	3170U1	3170N1
Unit 2	Investigating Society and Social Issues	3170U2	3170N2
Unit 3	Social Change in Contemporary Society	3170U3	3170N3
Unit 4	Planning to Effect Social Change	3170U4	3170N4
WJEC GCSE Social Studies		3170QS	3170CS

The current edition of our Entry Procedures and Coding Information gives up-to-date entry procedures.

5.2 Grading, awarding and reporting

GCSE qualifications are reported on an eight point scale from A*-G, where A* is the highest grade. Results not attaining the minimum standard for the award will be reported as U (unclassified).

Individual unit results are reported on a uniform mark scale (UMS) with the following grade equivalences:

	MAX.	A*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
Unit 1	120	108	96	84	72	60	48	36	24
Unit 2	80	72	64	56	48	40	32	24	16
Unit 3	120	108	96	84	72	60	48	36	24
Unit 4	80	72	64	56	48	40	32	24	16
Subject Award	400	360	320	280	240	200	160	120	80

Appendix A: Opportunities for embedding elements of the Curriculum for Wales

Curriculum for Wales Strands	Unit 1	Unit 2	Unit 3	Unit 4
Cross-cutting Themes				
Local, National and International Contexts	✓	✓	✓	✓
Sustainability aspect of Local, National and International Contexts	✓	✓	✓	✓
Relationships and Sexuality Education	✓	✓	✓	✓
Diversity	✓	✓	✓	✓
Human Rights Education	✓	✓	✓	✓
Careers and Work-Related Experiences	✓	✓	✓	✓
Cross-curricular Skills - Literacy				
Listening	✓	✓	✓	✓
Reading	✓	✓	✓	✓
Speaking	✓	✓	✓	✓
Writing	✓	✓	✓	✓

Curriculum for Wales Strands	Unit 1	Unit 2	Unit 3	Unit 4
Cross-curricular Skills - Numeracy				
Developing Mathematical Proficiency	✓	✓	✓	✓
Understanding the number system helps us to represent and compare relationships between numbers and quantities	✓	✓	✓	✓
Learning about geometry helps us understand shape, space and position and learning about measurement helps us quantify in the real world	✓		✓	
Learning that statistics represent data and that probability models chance help us make informed inferences and decisions	✓	✓	✓	✓
Digital Competence				
Citizenship	✓	✓	✓	✓
Interacting and Collaborating	✓	✓	✓	✓
Producing		✓		✓
Data and Computational Thinking	✓	✓	✓	✓

Curriculum for Wales Strands	Unit 1	Unit 2	Unit 3	Unit 4
Integral Skills				
Creativity and Innovation	✓	✓	✓	✓
Critical Thinking and Problem Solving	✓	✓	✓	✓
Planning and Organisation		✓		✓
Personal Effectiveness	✓	✓	✓	✓

Appendix B: Concept coverage

Those in italics indicate possible concept coverage depending on teaching approaches.

Concept	Unit 1	Unit 2	Unit 3	Unit 4
Authority and governance	1.1.1 1.1.3 <i>1.1.4</i> 1.2.1 1.2.2 1.2.3 1.3.2 1.3.3 1.3.4	2.1.1 2.3.1 2.3.2	3.1.1 3.1.4 3.1.5 3.1.7	4.1.2 <i>4.2.1</i>
Cause and effect	1.1.1 1.1.2 1.1.4 <i>1.1.5</i> 1.2.1 1.2.2 1.2.3 1.3.1 1.3.2 1.3.3 1.3.4	2.1.1 2.1.2 2.2.2 2.2.3 2.3.1 2.3.2	3.1.3 3.1.4 3.1.5 3.1.6 3.1.7 3.2.2 3.2.3 3.2.4 3.2.5	4.1.1 <i>4.1.2</i> <i>4.2.1</i>
Change and continuity	1.1.3 1.1.4 1.1.5 1.2.1 1.2.3 1.3.1 1.3.2 1.3.3 1.3.4	2.2.1 2.2.2 2.2.3 2.3.1 2.3.2	3.1.1 3.1.2 3.1.3 3.1.4 3.1.5 3.1.6 3.1.7 3.2.1 3.2.2 3.2.3 3.2.4 3.2.5	4.1.1 <i>4.1.2</i> <i>4.1.3</i> 4.2.1 <i>4.3.1</i> <i>4.3.2</i>
Citizenship	1.1.2 1.1.3 1.2.3 1.3.2 1.3.4	2.2.1	3.1.1 3.1.2 3.1.5 3.2.4 3.2.5	4.1.1 <i>4.1.2</i> <i>4.1.3</i> 4.2.1 <i>4.3.1</i> <i>4.3.2</i>
Community	1.1.1 1.1.2 1.1.3 1.1.4 1.1.5 1.2.2 1.2.3 1.3.1	2.1.1 2.2.2 2.2.3 2.2.4 2.3.1 2.3.2	3.1.1 3.1.2 3.1.3 3.1.4 3.1.5 3.1.6 3.1.7 3.2.1	4.1.1 <i>4.1.2</i> <i>4.1.3</i> 4.2.1 <i>4.3.1</i> <i>4.3.2</i>

Concept	Unit 1	Unit 2	Unit 3	Unit 4
	1.3.2 1.3.3 1.3.4		3.2.2 3.2.3 3.2.4 3.2.5	
Diversity	1.1.1 1.1.2 1.1.3 1.1.4 1.1.5 1.2.1 1.2.2 1.2.3 1.3.1 1.3.2 1.3.3 1.3.4	2.1.1 2.2.2 2.2.3 2.2.4 2.3.1 2.3.2	3.1.1 3.1.2 3.1.3 3.1.4 3.1.5 3.1.6 3.1.7 3.2.1 3.2.4 3.2.5	4.1.1 4.1.2 4.1.3 4.2.1 4.3.1 4.3.2
Identity and belonging	1.1.1 1.1.2 1.1.3 1.1.4 1.1.5 1.2.1 1.2.2 1.2.3 1.3.1 1.3.2 1.3.3 1.3.4	2.1.1 2.2.2 2.2.3 2.2.4 2.3.1 2.3.2	3.1.1 3.1.2 3.1.3 3.1.4 3.1.5 3.1.6 3.1.7 3.2.1 3.2.2 3.2.4 3.2.5	4.1.1 4.1.2 4.1.3 4.2.1 4.3.1 4.3.2
Interconnectedness	1.1.1 1.1.2 1.1.3 1.1.4 1.1.5 1.2.1 1.2.2 1.2.3 1.3.1 1.3.2 1.3.3 1.3.4	2.1.1 2.2.2 2.2.3 2.2.4 2.3.1 2.3.2	3.1.1 3.1.2 3.1.3 3.1.4 3.1.5 3.1.6 3.1.7 3.2.1 3.2.2 3.2.4 3.2.5	4.1.1 4.1.2 4.2.1
Justice and equality	1.1.3 1.1.4 1.2.1 1.2.2 1.2.3 1.3.1 1.3.2 1.3.3 1.3.4	2.1.1 2.2.2 2.2.3 2.2.4	3.1.1 3.1.2 3.1.4 3.1.5 3.2.1 3.2.2 3.2.3 3.2.4 3.2.5	4.1.1 4.1.2 4.2.1 4.3.1 4.3.2

Concept	Unit 1	Unit 2	Unit 3	Unit 4
Responsibility	1.1.3 1.1.4 1.2.1 1.2.2 1.2.3 1.3.1 1.3.2 1.3.3 1.3.4	2.2.2 2.2.3 2.2.4 2.3.1 2.3.2	3.1.1 3.1.2 3.1.4 3.1.5 3.1.6 3.1.7	4.1.1 4.1.2 4.2.1 4.3.1 4.3.2
Rights	1.1.2 1.1.3 1.2.2 1.2.3 1.3.1 1.3.2 1.3.3 1.3.4	2.2.4 2.3.1 2.3.2	3.1.1 3.1.2 3.1.5 3.2.4 3.2.5	4.1.1 4.1.2 4.1.3 4.2.1 4.3.1 4.3.2
Social action	1.1.3 1.3.2 1.3.3 1.3.4	2.3.2	3.1.5 3.2.1 3.2.2 3.2.3 3.2.4 3.2.5	4.1.1 4.1.2 4.1.3 4.2.1 4.3.1 4.3.2

Appendix C: Content scope

This table shows where areas of content have a specific Welsh, UK or global focus or where the content could be taught using examples drawn from these.

Scope	Unit 1	Unit 2	Unit 3	Unit 4
Wales	1.1.1	2.1.1	3.1.1	4.1.1
	1.1.2	2.1.2	3.1.2	4.1.2
	1.1.3	2.2.2	3.1.3	4.1.3
	1.1.4	2.2.3	3.1.4	4.2.1
	1.1.5	2.2.4	3.1.5	4.3.1
	1.2.1	2.3.1	3.1.7	4.3.2
	1.2.2	2.3.2	3.2.1	
	1.2.3		3.2.4	
	1.3.1		3.2.5	
	1.3.2			
	1.3.3			
	1.3.4			
UK	1.1.1	2.1.1	3.1.1	4.1.1
	1.1.2	2.1.2	3.1.2	4.1.2
	1.1.3	2.2.2	3.1.3	4.1.3
	1.1.4	2.2.3	3.1.4	4.2.1
	1.2.1	2.2.4	3.1.5	4.3.1
	1.2.2	2.3.1	3.1.7	4.3.2
	1.2.3	2.3.2	3.2.1	
	1.3.1		3.2.4	
	1.3.2			
	1.3.3			
	1.3.4			
Global	1.1.1	2.1.1	3.1.1	4.1.1
	1.1.2	2.1.2	3.1.2	4.1.2
	1.1.3	2.2.2	3.1.3	4.1.3
	1.1.4	2.2.3	3.1.4	4.2.1
	1.2.1	2.2.4	3.1.5	4.3.1
	1.2.2	2.3.1	3.1.7	4.3.2
	1.2.3	2.3.2	3.2.1	
	1.3.1		3.2.4	
	1.3.2			
	1.3.3			
	1.3.4			