

Making sense of your AS Sociology grade

Having completed your AS WJEC Sociology exams, you may now be looking at your results and wondering what they really mean. The headline A–E grade is important, but it does not tell the whole story. To understand where you currently stand and what you will need to achieve your target grade at the end of A2, you also need to look closely at your UMS scores.



Raw Scores Vs UMS

Your **raw mark** is the number of marks you scored on the paper. WJEC converts this into a **UMS score**, which is used to calculate your overall AS and A-level grade. Therefore, when considering final outcomes, **UMS is the figure that matters most**.

For example, based on the 2025 WJEC data:

UNIT 1 - RAW SCORE = 45/60 equates to a UMS SCORE = 64/75

Your AS Grade

Your AS grade is out of a maximum **200 UMS marks**.

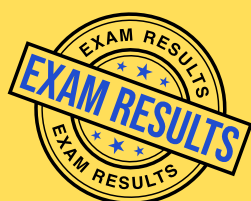
- **UNIT 1 (Acquiring Culture) - 75 UMS**
- **UNIT 2 (Understanding Society and Methods of Sociological Enquiry) - 125 UMS**

Fill in the data from your AS Unit grades below:

UNIT 1 - Acquiring Culture	-	/75
UNIT 2 - Understanding Society	-	/125
TOTAL UMS -	/200	AS GRADE:

AS Grade UMS Boundaries

- **A = 160**
- **B = 140**
- **C = 120**
- **D = 100**
- **E = 80**





The bigger picture



However, it is important to see the bigger picture. **Your AS results make up 40% of the full A level, while the two A2 exams account for the remaining 60%:** one is worth **125 UMS** and the other **175 UMS**. Your final A-level grade is therefore calculated from a total of **500 UMS points**.

This means the A2 exams represent a much higher proportion of your total grade. A strong A2 performance can make up for a disappointing AS result, but it also places greater pressure on the second year and can make AS results less valuable.

Your A2 targets

Your final grade will be based on the number of total UMS you collect up to a maximum of **500**. The grade boundaries for your final A Level are:

A* - 400 - You must get 90% or above in the A2 Units (This equates to 270/300 UMS).

A = 400 B = 350 C = 300 D = 250 E = 200

You can work out where you stand in relation to your targets. Start by calculating how many UMS points you need to achieve an A-C grade at A Level:

Subtract your AS UMS Points from the following:

A	400 -	=
B	350 -	=
C	300 -	=

Now you should be clear on what your target number of UMS points is for your A2 year. You have two examinations in which to collect the points you require. These are:

- **UNIT 3 - Power and Control- 125 UMS**
- **UNIT 4 - Social Inequality and Applied Methods- 175 UMS**

You can now start to consider how well you need to perform in each exam in order to achieve your target. Have a look at the worked examples on the next page to guide you with this.



For reference here are the raw score to UMS score conversions from 2025 (these can vary slightly from year to year).

UNIT 3 - 125 UMS (70 Raw Marks)

Grade	A	B	C
UMS Boundary	100	88	75
Raw Mark Boundary	41	34	28

UNIT 4 - 175 UMS (100 Raw Marks)

Grade	A	B	C
UMS Boundary	140	123	105
Raw Mark Boundary	65	55	45

Example #1

These are Annie's AS results:

Unit 1 - 48 UMS
Unit 2 - 91 UMS
TOTAL - 139 UMS
GRADE - C

These are UMS points she requires for A2:

A	$400 - 139 = 261$
B	$350 - 139 = 211$
C	$300 - 139 = 161$

Analysis

Although Annie achieved a C grade, it was a very high C, just one UMS mark below a B. With 60% of the available UMS marks still to be earned at A2, she has a realistic opportunity to improve her final grade. For example, scores of **90/125 in Unit 3** and **121/175 in Unit 4** would give Annie an overall total of **350 UMS**, securing a B grade. These scores would require consistent hard work but are realistically achievable. An A grade is also possible if she performs particularly well at A2. For example, **110/125 in Unit 3** and **151/175 in Unit 4** would raise her overall total to **400 UMS**, the boundary for an A grade.

Example #2

These are Rhys' AS results:

Unit 1 - 59 UMS
Unit 2 - 101 UMS
TOTAL - 160 UMS
GRADE - A

These are UMS points he requires for A2:

A	$400 - 160 = 240$
B	$350 - 160 = 190$
C	$300 - 160 = 140$

Analysis

Although Rhys will rightly be pleased with his A grade, he achieved exactly the **160 UMS** required. With 60% of the total UMS still available at A2, he will need another strong performance to maintain that grade. Any complacency or underachievement could see him slip to a B or lower. For example, Rhys would need around **100/125 in Unit 3** and **140/175 in Unit 4** to finish with an A. These are demanding scores, and falling even a few UMS marks short would drop him below the A-grade boundary. Rhys therefore still needs to work very hard at A2. This shows why the UMS score is more informative than the letter grade alone. Rhys's friend Danny also achieved an A, but with 185 UMS, placing him in a much stronger position going into A2

Example #3

These are Josie's AS results:

Unit 1 - 32 UMS
Unit 2 - 79 UMS
TOTAL - 111 UMS
GRADE - D

These are UMS points she requires for A2:

A	$400 - 111 = 289$
B	$350 - 111 = 239$
C	$300 - 111 = 189$

Analysis

Josie underperformed at AS, achieving a mid-range D grade. However, with 60% of the total UMS still available at A2, she could move up to a C if she works hard. For example, **89/125 in Unit 3** and **100/175 in Unit 4** would be enough to achieve this one-grade improvement. A very strong A2 performance could even put a B grade within reach. Josie may also benefit from resitting Unit 1, where she scored only 32/75. Improving this score could make a B (or even an A) more achievable. However, there are potential disadvantages to resitting, outlined on the next page, which she should consider carefully.



FAQs



Can I improve my grade at A2?

As the examples on the previous page show, the answer depends more on your UMS score than on the letter grade itself. Improving your final grade is certainly possible: a one-grade increase is quite common, and a two-grade increase can also be achieved. A three-grade increase is much less likely. It is also possible to drop by one or two grades if your effort declines or you become complacent.

Students who are already near the top of a grade boundary, as in Example #1, are particularly well placed to improve through consistent hard work. If you are the lower end of a grade boundary your risk of falling back also becomes more real (see Example #2). The greater proportion of UMS available at A2 makes grade improvement more achievable, although this must be balanced against the increased demands of A2 study. Resitting an AS unit may help, but it also brings potential drawbacks, which are considered in the next FAQ. In most cases, I recommend focusing your efforts on achieving the highest possible scores in Units 3 and 4, as this is generally the safest route to success

Should I resit my AS papers?

Resitting an AS unit in which you underperformed is one possible option. The resit would take place during the same summer exam series as your A2 exams. Be aware that your school or college may charge you the exam entry fee. You should consider the following when making this decision:



- You may gain additional UMS points, helping you improve your final grade by one or more grades.
- Resitting Unit 2 may be particularly beneficial because some of its content is also assessed in A2 Unit 4, meaning your revision will overlap.



- The Unit 1 and Unit 2 exams often take place close to Unit 3. Resitting either unit could divide your revision time and make it harder to maximise your Unit 3 score.
- With 60% of the total UMS still available at A2, your time may be better spent preparing thoroughly for Units 3 and 4.

Remember, **a resit can not decrease your grade**. If you perform worse in the resit, your higher, original UMS score will be retained.

Should I get my paper remarked?

You may request a review of marking for either or both AS units, although this will usually involve paying a fee. **Your mark could increase, but it could also decrease**, so the decision always carries some risk. Any change in UMS is likely to be small or moderate, and with 300 UMS still available at A2, it may be wiser to focus on maximising your performance in Units 3 and 4. You should be wary of chasing the extra mark that takes you from 159 up to 160 for example, (which will take you from a B to an A) as this makes very little material difference to your final A level grade.

With your permission, your teacher can now access a free electronic copy of your exam paper. If you are concerned that it may not have been marked accurately, ask your teacher to review it and advise you. However, even with their support, there is no guarantee that your mark will increase. Consider the decision carefully and discuss it fully with your school and parents or carers.

How do I get an A*?

A* grades are difficult to achieve, and even highly able and conscientious students can fall short. The key is performing exceptionally well in the two A2 units: you must achieve at least **270/300 UMS**, equivalent to **90%** of the available A2 marks. For example, **113/125 in Unit 3** and **157/175 in Unit 4** would be sufficient. Your AS score has relatively little impact on your chances of an A*, provided your overall total reaches at least **400 UMS**. If you achieve **270 UMS** at A2, an AS score of **130 UMS** (a C grade) would still be enough. However, these are very demanding scores with little margin for error. You will need to work consistently throughout the year and develop strong skills in analysis, evaluation and application. Memorising knowledge alone will not be enough; you must also demonstrate higher-order thinking and respond effectively to unfamiliar questions.

Is A2 harder than AS?

The short answer is yes! A-level courses become progressively more demanding, and A2 study can be one of the greatest academic challenges you have faced so far. Both the volume of content and the skills required will exceed those at AS.

The good news is that you have already developed knowledge and skills that will help you meet these challenges. The initial step up to A2 may feel difficult, and this may be reflected in lower assessment scores early in the year. This is a normal part of the process.

Stay consistent, listen to your teachers and remember that progress is not always linear. Occasional self-doubt is natural, but back yourself. Stay organised, study regularly and efficiently, and make full use of the support and resources available to you.

What help and support is available to me?

Your teachers and other school or college staff are there to support you and should always be your first point of contact if you have questions or need advice. There are no silly questions, so ask whenever you need guidance or reassurance.

There are also many online resources to support independent study. WJEC provides a range of excellent materials on its website, including blended-learning lessons designed for self-guided study. At Social Science Sorted, we have created free and premium resources to support your learning, including our new **Sociological Research Methods** Student Book, which guides you through the content required for the research methods aspects of the WJEC course, using clear explanations, evaluation points and up to date sociological research. You can find this, and much more at:

www.socialsciencesorted.com