AS Research Methods

| **Specification and content** | **Covered ✓** | **RAG** | **RAG** |
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| * **1. Quantitative and qualitative methods of research; research design** * **Sources of data, including questionnaires, interviews, participant and non-participant observation, experiments, documents and official statistics** * **The distinction between primary and secondary data, and between quantitative and qualitative data** * **The relationship between positivism, interpretivism and sociological methods; the nature of ‘social facts’**   **The theoretical, practical and ethical considerations influencing choice of topic, choice of method(s) and the conduct of research (AS and A Level)** | | | |
| * **Types of research method and data sources:** * the differences between quantitative and qualitative data, * strengths and limitations of quantitative and qualitative data * the differences between primary and secondary sources of data; * strengths and limitations of primary and secondary sources of data; |  |  |  |
| * **Primary methods of data collection and the main variants of each :** * Questionnaires   + Interviews (structured and unstructured)   + observation (participant and non-participant observation)   + experiments (laboratory and field experiments).   + The main stages of the research process for these methods.   + Practical, Ethical and theoretical strengths and weaknesses for each method |  |  |  |
| * **Secondary sources of data:** * Documents (personal, public and historical; different sources of official statistics.) * official statistics (including different sources) |  |  |  |
| **Research design, in relation to**   * pilot studies and * sampling techniques; * main stages of the research process in relation to the methods. |  |  |  |
| * **Practical issues affecting choice of methods and sources,** * time, * cost, * access and * researcher’s characteristics; * strengths and limitations of different methods and sources in relation to these issues. |  |  |  |
| * **Ethical issues affecting choice of methods and sources,** * informed consent, * deceit and * vulnerable groups; * strengths and limitations of different methods and sources in relation to these issues. |  |  |  |
| * **Theoretical issues affecting choice of methods and sources,** * reliability, * validity, * representativeness, * positivism, * interpretivism; * strengths and limitations of different methods and sources in relation to these issues. |  |  |  |
| * **Practical, ethical and theoretical factors influencing choice of research topic,** * personal experience and * policy concerns. |  |  |  |

Methods in context

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| 1. **Students must be able to apply sociological research methods to the study of education** | | | |
| **The application of the range of primary and secondary methods and sources of data (as covered below in AS level Research Methods and in A-level Theory and Methods) to the particular topics studied in education, with specific reference to the strengths and limitations of the different methods and sources of data in different educational contexts.** |  |  |  |