ASSESSMENT GUIDE SOS4150 – FALL 2021

The exam in SOS4150 consists of a term paper written in an essay format. The student will receive a grade between *A* and *F*. The student defines the topic and objective of the term paper, usually in dialogue with the lecturers. The lecturers approve the research question (or topic). The term paper should be 4000 words (+/- 10%) and can be written in Norwegian, Swedish, Danish or English. See https://www.uio.no/studier/emner/sv/iss/SOS4150/ for more information about formal requirements.

In the term paper, the students should describe and investigate a certain phenomenon or topic chosen by themselves, related to one or more of the topics covered in the syllabus. The term paper should document that the student can fruitfully use perspectives, concepts or ideas from these texts.

However, due to the intensive and compressed nature of the course and the limited number of topics and empirical analyses on sociology of health inequalities presented, the students may also use other relevant texts from other sources. The papers should be graded by the criteria below. To receive an A, we expect the term paper to fulfil or exceed all, or nearly all, of these criteria. To receive a C the term paper should fulfil most of these criteria, though it may fall short on some. A term paper that fails to fulfil most of these criteria should be given an F, even if the paper meets the formal requirements (e.g. word count).

1. Research question	The term paper should have a clearly formulated research question. It should be: • Related to one or more of the topics covered in the course; • Possible to (tentatively) answer with the methods/approach used; • Not too wide to be answered within the scope of the paper; • Not too narrow to be uninteresting or irrelevant; • Clearly motivated.
2. Basic knowledge	The term paper should reflect sufficient knowledge about the topic and about relevant texts from the syllabus. It should: • Show a good understanding of the subject matter; • Show an understanding of central concepts, theoretical positions and methods; • Show, through the use of references, that the student has read and manages to incorporate central arguments from relevant syllabus texts.
3. Conceptual clarity	Concepts, measures and definitions should be used clearly and accurately. The term paper should: • Include clear definitions of central concepts; • Include critical reflections on the utility, strengths and weaknesses of concepts, definitions and measures. In particular, an independent understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of concepts, definitions and measures should be rewarded.
4. Consistence	Arguments made in the term paper should be: • Clearly articulated and progress in an orderly fashion that is easy to follow; • Logically consistent; • Clearly linked to the research question.
5. Language	The term paper should be written in a clear, succinct language. It should: • Be sufficiently grammatically correct;

	• Use formally well-formed sentences. However, some students may have difficulties with reading and writing, and some foreign exchange students or recently immigrated students may also struggle with the language. We therefore encourage the examiners to take such potential issues into account and focus primarily on the substantive content of the term paper.
6. Originality and creativity	Although this is difficult, the student should strive to contribute with relevant knowledge/original insights through the term paper. The term paper should ideally do one or more of the following: • Combine insights or information from different sources to shed new light on the topic; • Apply existing theories or perspectives to a new case; • Compare or contrast two or more relevant cases in an interesting way; • Empirically explore or test a hypothesis related to a topic covered by the course; • Show originality or creativity in some other way. Term papers that show a high degree of creativity and/or independence in the use of theory, methods, sources etc. should be rewarded.
7. (Self) critical reflection	The term paper should show a high level of critical reflection. It should: • Present and address counterarguments, possible alternative explanations and conflicting views/theories; • Show openness to alternative interpretations; • Be open about limitations with regards to data, materials/sources and/or methods used. Critical reflections on the main theoretical position and/or approach used in the term paper should be rewarded.
8. Good research practice	The term paper should adhere to norms about good research practice. This includes, but is not limited to, norms about citation and plagiarism, openness, etc. (also see rules on cheating and plagiarism).
9. Overview	The term paper should show that the student is capable of differentiating between central and more peripheral aspects of the topic.
10. Empirical basis	The term paper should base its main arguments on empirical evidence. It should: • Draw on relevant empirical research literature from the syllabus • Draw on relevant empirical research literature from outside the syllabus when this is relevant • Include relevant references to empirical studies that contradict the main argument • Reference relevant sources (such as official statistics, laws, etc.) when making statements about facts.
11. Non-normativity	Although some topics covered by the course are politically contested and have normative implications, the term paper should not be strongly normative, or only present a single side of an argument. The term paper should: • Not include strongly normative or subjective opinions or views, unless these are clearly presented as such; • Not argue in favour of a particular political or ideological view. However, some normativity is acceptable. For instance, motivational statements in favour of reducing discrimination, inequality of opportunity, etc.

12. Critical thinking	Term papers that challenge prevailing views, methods or approaches in a good way, particularly those presented in the course or syllabus texts, should be rewarded.
13. Empirical analysis	The term paper does not need to be based on an empirical analysis, but students are encouraged to do this if they have sufficient skills and time. Term papers that present results from an empirical quantitative or qualitative analysis should be held to similar standards at those used for corresponding MA-level methods courses.