



GCE EXAMINERS' REPORTS

**GCE
SOCIOLOGY
AS/Advanced**

SUMMER 2023

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2200U10-1 SOCIOLOGY (WALES) AS

General Certificate of Education

Summer 2023

Advanced Subsidiary/Advanced

UNIT 1 ACQUIRING CULTURE

General Comments

The paper was accessible to all candidates. The higher tariff questions allowed the opportunity for candidates to demonstrate higher order skills. Lower tariff questions furnished candidates with opportunities to demonstrate accurate knowledge and understanding. There were some rubric errors and some handwriting issues. Candidates should write the numbers of the questions they have answered on the front of the answer booklet but almost none did so. The examining team would like to urge examinations officers to request candidates to enter the numbers of the questions they have answered on the front of the answer booklet at the end of the examination.

As usual, option 1 Families and households was the most popular option. However, the characteristics of responses to both options were very similar. All but the very best candidates struggled to demonstrate high level AO3 skills in essays in both options. The standard of English was mixed. Some candidates were able to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding and, in higher tariff questions, they demonstrated their ability to weigh up and comment on sociological ideas. However, some candidates struggled to communicate effectively and often failed to match the higher mark band descriptors.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Compulsory section A

Q.1 (a) It was a surprise to examiners to find that many candidates were unable to offer a clear definition of this basic term. Vague and often generalised answers that merged norms and values together, were common. The item should have been used as the platform for further knowledge and examples.

Tip: Give a definition plus two other facts and an example that links to the item.

(b) Many candidates were able to offer focussed answers to this question. The key here was to examine the process of socialisation and the transmission of culture. Many candidates were able to demonstrate a sound understanding of the process of socialisation. However, the examples offered to illustrate the process were often less effective. In this question the specifics of the process were focussed on culture and so candidates could have referred to anything encompassed by the term. For example, they could have looked at norms, values, traditions or even gender. Good answers often fell short of full marks because the examples did not effectively illustrate the processes described in the answer.

Tip: Two agents with the focus on the process of socialisation and examples that link to the specifics of the question. For example, if the question asks about culture the examples should link to culture.

Section B Options

Option 1 Families and Households

This option was, by far, the most popular of the two options available to CANDIDATES .

- Q.2 (a) (i)** It is difficult to imagine how this option could be studied without an examination of different family structures. One of these structures is the re-constituted family, which is, an increasingly common family type in UK society. A significant number of candidates were unable to accurately define this key term. Nevertheless, many candidates did accurately define the term and offered extra knowledge through examples and characteristics associated with this family type. **Tip:** Offer a definition, two other facts and an example.
- (ii)** The key to success with these questions is to offer two clear reasons which are supported and validated by evidence. The reasons should be clearly explained and linked to the focus of the question. This advice has been communicated in PE reports and in CPD. It was reassuring to see many candidates achieving the success criteria. There were many, well supported reasons offered. However, there were some anecdotal responses that offered little more than common sense reasons. These answers inevitably lacked sociological knowledge, and this was reflected in the mark awarded. Candidates often utilised rather dated evidence, especially where they suggested the changing position of women in society as a reason for a decline in marriage. The decline in rates of marriage is a relatively contemporary trend and yet Sharpe's work was often cited in support. Candidates were not penalised for this but, utilising a more up to date study is recommended.

Tip: Offer two clear reasons in two paragraphs. Use evidence to support each reason and link each back to the focus.

- (b)** This was a very accessible question, although it was a less popular choice than question 2c. Answers to this essay were mixed. Some offered sound and well supported sociological reasons for changes in the divorce rate. However, very few examined both increasing and decreasing rates of divorce. Had they done so, the response would have been more detailed and wide ranging. Some responses were more like a list than a discussion because there was no debate about the reasons offered. Because of this, some responses were more similar to what one might expect as a response to a 2aii question than to an essay. In order to achieve a high mark for AO3 candidates are required to assess not merely describe. Some candidates were able to achieve a good AO1 mark but failed to do so for AO3.

Tip: try to allow around 35 mins for the essay. Make sure you take note of the command. Don't just describe. Maintain focus throughout the essay.

- Q.2 (c)** This was the most popular choice in this option. However few candidates achieved the highest possible mark. Most candidates were able to identify the view in question and to describe critics of the view. There lies the problem- they described alternative views rather than assess them in relation to the view and offer a judgement on the view. The command word in this essay was “evaluate”. Candidates who describe alternative views are juxtaposing ideas not evaluating them and as such, they struggled to access the higher mark bands for AO3. There was a great deal of scope for rich lines of debate in this essay, but few candidates capitalised on this.

Tip: try to allow around 35 mins for the essay. Make sure you take note of the command. Don't just describe. Maintain focus throughout the essay.

Option 2 Youth cultures

This was the less popular of the two options.

- Q.3 (a) (i)** Most candidates were able to offer a definition of the term and some were able to achieve full marks through the additional knowledge and examples offered.

Tip: Offer a definition, two other facts and an example.

- (ii)** Answers to this question were mixed. Some candidates offered well supported, sociological reasons whilst others offered unsupported, anecdotal reasons and as such failed to score high marks.

Tip: Offer two clear reasons in two paragraphs. Use evidence to support the reason and link each back to the focus.

- (b)** This essay was a popular choice. Most who chose it were able to identify the view and offer alternatives. There lies the issue as reported in the essays in the family and Households option. Candidates who describe alternative views are juxtaposing ideas not discussing them and as such, they struggled to access the higher mark bands for AO3. There was a great deal of scope for rich lines of debate in this essay, but few candidates capitalised on this.

Tip: try to allow around 35 mins for the essay. Make sure the student takes note of the command. Don't just describe. Maintain focus throughout the essay.

- (c)** This was also a popular choice but the same problems were observed by the marking team as were observed in other essays. Some candidates were unable to identify the view accurately and this inevitably impacted on their ability to construct and evaluative response. However, there were some very competent responses which were focussed, well supported and evaluative in tone.

Tip: try to allow around 35 mins for the essay. Make sure candidates take note of the command. Don't just describe. Maintain focus throughout the essay.

Summary of key points

1. Candidates must read the instructions on the paper and answer the correct number of questions.
2. Candidates should allow a little more than a mark a minute for each question. For example, leave around 40 mins for the essay and divide the rest of the time between the other questions.
3. Read the commands carefully. Understand what they mean.
4. Use evaluative language in essays.

2200U20-1 SOCIOLOGY (WALES) AS

General Certificate of Education (New)

Summer 2023

Advanced Subsidiary/Advanced

UNIT 2

UNDERSTANDING SOCIETY AND METHODS OF SOCIOLOGICAL ENQUIRY

General Comments

The majority of candidates responded well to this paper having been effectively prepared by their centres.

The ability of the cohort mirrored the broad ability range of previous years with candidates achieving a spread of Band 4 to Band 1 answers across the three skill areas; AO1, AO2, AO3.

Accessibility of tasks/items: In light of responses Q1b was perhaps more challenging than 10 mark questions in previous series.

The demands of the tasks/items vary throughout the paper.

Candidates were generally able to demonstrate knowledge and understanding across the range of questions. Mirroring previous years, in the very best answers, candidates were confident in manipulating previously unseen data – both prose and numerical.

Candidates who scored highly made good use of empirical evidence and contemporary debates and examples, in addition to demonstrating consistent proficiency in all three skills areas in essays: AO1, AO2 and AO3.

The level of English and, where appropriate, Welsh was good, although some spelling errors of sociologist's names were centre specific.

There appeared to be more rubric errors this year. For example, a significant minority of candidates answered questions from their chosen and then additional options.

A small number of candidates did not complete the whole paper with some candidates failing to complete the final essay question which attracts 30 marks.

In centres where candidates attempted the 30 mark question first, some candidates missed out a question, this might have been an oversight, especially when they did not record which sections had been completed.

Many candidates did not transfer their choice of questions onto the front of the paper – a visual reminder of which questions have been completed.

A minority of candidates did not write the number of the question they were answering in the margin.

Many candidates continued their initial answer at the end of the script with no indication which question was being answered. As a result the examiner had to remark the question. It would be much appreciated if candidates would note that they are continuing their answer along with the page where the continuation takes place.

Section A

Compulsory Question

Question 1(a) worth 5 marks is a straightforward question. AO1 and AO2 skills were assessed. This question was accessible to all candidates .

Questions 1(b), 2/3/4 (a) (ii) were also accessible to a broad range of CANDIDATES . AO1 and AO2 skills were assessed.

Questions 2/3/4 (a) (i) involved numerical data interpretation and to an extent continues to reflect centre preparation of candidates . AO1 and AO2 skills were assessed.

Question 1(c) and questions 2/3/4 (b) and (c) were essay questions and presented higher order challenges for candidates . These questions assessed proficiency on all three skill areas AO1, AO2, AO3, with the latter skill area continuing to pose the highest level of challenge.

Ideally centres will continue to encourage their learners to engage in sustained rather than juxtaposed evaluation in the 20 and 30 mark essay questions.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Question 1 - Compulsory

- Q.1 (a)** Most candidates had been well versed in how to respond to this question and had some understanding of the term ethics, although a minority did not attempt the question and a few confused ethics with ethnic, while others spoke about ethics in the context of religion. The stronger candidates defined ethics in detail and then provided two or three knowledge points to support their understanding. The link to moral guidelines was clear in these answers. While most candidates used the item, their references were often superficial and many who accessed a second AO2 mark, often achieved this by referring to a relevant study. When a study was used Laud Humphreys' Tea Room Trade was popular.
- (b)** The majority of candidates were able to identify at least one possible reason sociologists use a longitudinal approach. However, some did not answer in depth, while a significant minority provided two very similar reasons with overlapping content. There was heavy reliance on the item, especially as a significant minority of candidates did not fully understand the approach. Many candidates understood the concept of time in this type of study and focused on the possibility of building a rapport with the sample over time; however the notion of revisiting the same sample (in this case over a 4 year period) was less understood. Unfortunately this impacted the choice of studies; Eileen Barker, The Making of a Moonie, and Sue Sharpe 'Just Like A Girl' are not longitudinal studies. Relevant studies included Douglas: The Home and The School; The Millennium Cohort Study and 7 Up.

Candidates who made clear references to the item and supported their knowledge with clear examples/studies were more likely to achieve the highest AO2 marks. Those who achieved the highest marks clearly structured their answers into two separate reasons, explained in detail.

- Q.1 (c)** Most candidates were familiar with the concept 'qualitative methods', and there were many pleasing responses. A minority confused qualitative and quantitative methods losing valuable marks. Many candidates ES were able to identify the weaknesses of qualitative methods effectively with some able to discuss a detailed range of strengths – this imbalance was, as in previous years a consistent reason for candidates missing out on the highest marks.

There remains a tendency to juxtapose evaluative points, i.e. describe a list of strengths, then a list of weaknesses. Many candidates used the item well and referred to relevant studies, popular studies included work by Eileen Barker, Sue Sharpe, James Patrick and Ann Oakley. Unfortunately many continue to confuse reliability with validity with many including the concepts in the same sentence as if interchangeable and as a result, marks were lost.

Some candidates continue to assume the concepts representativeness and generalisability are characteristics of the method rather than the sample. Stronger answers made effective use of the item and referred to relevant studies that were contextualised in relation to the question. Some were able to embed the studies in their discussions of strengths and weaknesses. Unfortunately, in some centres not one candidate referenced a study, capping AO2 at 2/5 marks.

SECTION B

Option 1 - Education [This remains by far the most popular option]

Compulsory question

- Q.2 (a) (i)** Many understood the data and wrote very good answers, effectively engaging with and interpreting the data. Nearly all candidates could identify that Chinese candidates had the highest performance while the Gypsy/Roma/Irish Traveller candidates had the lowest performance. Stronger answers referred to an overall difference between the two groups and then made accurate references to other trends. Often they simply listed the data from the table without any attempt to analyse it. It might be useful for candidates to think about making comparisons and when the data is expressed in percentages as is the case here, think about referring to 'higher/lower/similar/same' to describe trends.

A significant minority discussed the number of entrants rather than the attainment of candidates. Many who attempted to interrogate the data referred to 'percentage difference' rather than 'percentage point difference' an inaccuracy which cost them AO2 marks. A significant minority continue to give reasons for the data, which was not required.

- Q.2 (a) (ii)** The majority of CANDIDATES provided two reasons for the relationship between ethnicity and educational achievement. Some successfully considered a school and an out of school explanation, while others considered material and cultural factors, or teacher expectations and the ethnocentric curriculum. Popular studies included Chau – Tiger parents, Feinstein, The Swann Report, Gillborn and Youdell, Modood, Fuller, Mirza and Mac an Ghail. Unfortunately a number of answers were not supported by studies and others drifted into social class answers. Some fairly stereotypical views were put forward that were not necessarily backed by evidence, sometimes becoming anecdotal. Strong answers referred to sociological reasons which were outlined, explained and supported with reference to writers or studies. There is no requirement for evaluation and no requirement to provide an opening paragraph describing trends. A minority provided more than two reasons, and this would have impacted on timing elsewhere.
- (b)** This question was popular and generally well addressed, requiring candidates to discuss feminist views of education. Higher scoring candidates were often able to discuss a range of feminist explanations and to examine these in detail, with references to liberal, Marxist and radical feminism being most popular. For some who generalised feminist views, their evaluative opportunities were curtailed. Some described different types of feminism but did not evaluate producing very descriptive answers. Candidates were generally less informed about feminism than they were last year about Marxist theories of education. Those who scored the highest demonstrated higher order essay writing techniques with high level evaluative and analytical style. Contextualised evaluation was evident in these answers, with a range of evaluation such as the experiences of boys in school, the feminisation of education, postfeminist perspectives, functionalist, Marxist critiques. For some, evaluation continues to be characterised by juxtaposition. The best answers adopted an evaluative tone throughout and made a judgement in their conclusion.
- (c)** This question was also popular and generally well addressed, with a variety of pleasing responses. Many were confident in comparing the school and out of school factors and this created an evaluative tone to the essay, which was less juxtaposed than Q2b. Stronger candidates considered the school as the main variable influencing educational achievement of different social classes, while also effectively considering influences outside the school. However, many appeared to ignore the question and began with a discussion of out of school explanations, while others tried to compare the impact of class to gender and ethnicity. Centres might view this knowledge as a revision opportunity. Some lower achieving answers were anecdotal. A common evaluation point used for both the 2(b) and 2(c) questions was 'Functionalists disagree as they see education as positive and a true meritocracy', often repeating the same point multiple times.

A wider range of evaluation points can enable access to higher marks. There were nevertheless some very high-quality responses which drew upon a range of studies such as labelling, Becker; setting and streaming, Ball; subcultures in school, Mac an Ghail, and to evaluate: cultural deprivation, Douglas; cultural capital, Bourdieu; material deprivation, Smith and Noble; Bernstein, language codes. The best answers adopted an evaluative tone throughout and made a judgement in their conclusion.

Option 2 – Media

Compulsory question

- Q.3 (a) (i)** Most candidates understood the data in the graph and were able to describe the data regarding young people's attitudes to fake news. Stronger answers referred to an overall trend noting young people were most likely to tell a parent/family member about the fake news and were least likely to tell a teacher. They then made accurate references to other choices. Many made comparative points between the different attitudes in 2018 and 2019. Some were able to refer to percentage point differences gaining extra AO2 marks. Some continue to give reasons for the data, which was not required. The best answers identified relationships between age groups and media sources. In most cases points were supported with reference to the data.
- (ii)** Higher achieving candidates clearly identified two ways sociologists say decisions are made about the content of the news and these were outlined, explained and supported with reference to studies. Many referred to the views of pluralists and then traditional Marxists or neo-Marxists. Whale and the GUMG were authors of popular studies. Teachers should be advised that encouraging candidates to write in a clearly structured way often enhances the clarity of their answers. There is no requirement to provide an opening paragraph. Lower achieving candidates were unable to discuss two ways in insufficient detail. It was pleasing to see there were fewer common-sense ideas and anecdotal references and examples than last summer.
- (b)** This was an accessible but less popular question on the paper which required candidates to discuss the view that media representations of minority ethnic groups are stereotypical. To do this effectively, candidates need to consider the evidence and discuss what the evidence suggests. The highest achievers maintained a clear focus on different minority ethnic groups, comparing the groups and/or referencing the representations of the white majority. Most were able to construct a debate, while the best answers examined the view in a detailed evaluative way. The highest achievers were able to draw upon examples and studies, with popular references being Hall, GUMG, and Giddens. There were few references to social media or current role models in the media from minority ethnic groups such as Akala and Stormzy. A significant minority relied on anecdotal evidence, resulting in lower AO3 marks. The best answers adopted an evaluative tone throughout and made a judgement in their conclusion.
- (c)** This was a more popular question than 3b. The focus was on a consideration of pluralist views of the media. Many were familiar with the pluralist views and opposing views from traditional Marxist, neo-Marxist, feminist and postmodern perspectives. There was however, a tendency for lower achieving candidates to briefly explain the pluralist views and spend significantly longer on evaluation, this sometimes led to juxtaposition rather than a debate. This impacted AO3 marks. Popular references to pluralists included Davies, Whale, Galtung and Rudge and Williams. The best answers understood and examined a range of pluralist views.

were able to engage in high level sophisticated and well supported lines of debate and these were highly rewarded in each skill domain, lower achievers produced more assertive answers, lacking reference supporting evidence and to the intricacies of theoretical debate. The best answers adopted an evaluative tone throughout and made a judgement in their conclusion.

Option 3 – Religion [far less popular option]

Compulsory question

Q.4 (a) (i) Despite being attempted by very few candidates, most understood the data and gave good answers. Higher scoring candidates referred to an overall pattern, for example overall a higher percentage of the respondents, 28.06% definitely do not believe in God or a higher power than the 21.07% those who definitely believe. This is a 6.99 percentage point difference. The candidates then made accurate references to other data. However, not all provided the comparative points on gender which would enable them to access band 3 marks. A significant number continues to give reasons for the data, which was not required. Those who scored lower marks just quoted the percentages resulting in descriptive answers. In most cases points were supported with reference to the data.

(ii) This question focused on two reasons for differences in religious belief in England and Wales. High achieving candidates clearly identified two 'reasons', for example popular choices were gender differences in religious practice and the growth of secularisation. The best answers referred to sociological reasons which were outlined, explained and supported with reference to writers or studies, for example Glock and Stark, Bruce. Candidates could draw on their knowledge and understanding required in the debates section of the specification to answer this question. Teachers should be advised that encouraging candidates to write in a clearly structured way usually enhances the clarity of their answers. There is no requirement to provide an opening paragraph describing trends. Lower achieving candidates often described the reasons in insufficient detail.

(b) Very few attempted this question although most who attempted the question had knowledge of the view that the UK is a force for change in society. The candidates were required to examine and make a judgement on this view. The answers were generally well focused. In lower scoring answers knowledge of the debate on whether religion is a force for change lacked breadth and depth, although most answers contained some knowledge, with references to Weber, O'Toole, Gramsci. Those who scored the highest demonstrated an understanding of the intricacies of the debate and were able to examine alternative views from the Marxist, Functionalists and feminist perspectives. Excellent responses were characterised by higher order essay writing techniques including a high level evaluative and analytical style.

Unfortunately, in many answers, evaluation continues to be characterised by juxtaposition rather than a sustained debate leading to a judgement about whether the UK is a secular society. The best answers adopted an evaluative tone throughout and made a judgement in their conclusion.

Q.4 (c) Very few attempted this question. The focus here was on a consideration of the view that the growth of New Age movements is evidence of an increase in spirituality. High achieving candidates successfully considered the view in addition to studies, for example Giddens, Heelas, Stark and Bainbridge.

There was some tendency towards answers that lacked breadth and depth of knowledge, however higher achievers grappled with competing sociological perspectives, in particular postmodern views. For lower achievers, evaluation tended to consist of a juxtaposition of ideas, some of which were based on common-sense assumptions. The best answers adopted an evaluative tone throughout and made a judgement in their conclusion.

Summary of key points

Essay Questions - candidates should continue to be encouraged to engage in sustained rather than juxtaposed evaluation in the 20 and 30 mark essay questions.

Question 1 (a)/b)(c)

*When candidates copy or briefly refer to the Item rather than use the Item to address the questions, this impacts on their AO2 marks.

*Candidates need to be advised to avoid using the concepts validity and reliability in the same sentence as they have very different meanings.

Questions 2/3/4(a)(i)

There is no requirement for candidates to give reasons for the data.

Question 1 (b), 2/3/4(ii)

Candidates who achieved the highest marks clearly structured their answers into two separate points. There is no requirement for an introduction and conclusion.

1200U30-1 SOCIOLOGY (WALES) A2

General Certificate of Education

Summer 2023

Advanced Subsidiary/Advanced

UNIT 3 POWER AND CONTROL

General Comments

As with last year, overall, unit 3 responses were of a lower standard than previous series, although again, there were some outstanding answers with many clearly well prepared for the unit. Both failure to attempt questions and rubric errors were more common than any other previous series. It is always important to ensure that candidates are familiar with the structure of the paper and that it is impressed upon them that even if they believe they can answer questions in other sections, it is very unlikely that they will have sufficient knowledge to exceed band 1. They should also be encouraged to attempt every question even if they are not confident with their response. There is plenty of time with this paper so there is nothing to be lost in 'having a go' and picking up some additional marks that can mean the difference between grades.

Illegible handwriting continues to be an issue and centres are advised to contact the WJEC and look at making alternative arrangements for candidates in these cases as they cannot be awarded marks if their answers are not distinguishable. Also, still an issue for examiners, is the lack of paragraphs used by some candidates, sometimes with numerous pages of unbroken prose. As with previous years, in 20-mark and 40-mark questions, there was a relationship between quality and how well an answer was structured into meaningful paragraphs. Candidates who organise their essays into clear 'points', logically presented, are more likely to access the highest marks as use of different skills can be identified more easily.

Use of coloured pens, highlighters and even tippex is increasing, and some centres included photocopies of scripts.

It is still the case that many candidates did not write which questions they had attempted on the front of their examination booklet which then takes examiners some time to complete. Some also do not indicate within the booklet which questions they are attempting and is not always clear, giving examiners further problems.

Option 1 – Crime and Deviance continues to be by far the most popular option, with a very small number of centres opting for the Health and Disability (0.4%) and World Sociology (3.6%) options.

All questions in all options are accessible, though the demands of each question increase in terms of AO skills required – AO3 is only assessed in the longer essay questions (b and c in each option) where it is worth 14 of the 40 available marks. It is accessing these AO3 marks that continues to provide candidates with the most difficulty.

Most allocated their time well between the three questions, although, some 'over-wrote' for aii, which sometimes had a knock on effect for the 40 mark essay. Many still underwrite for ai, but that may be due to a lack of knowledge for this series.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Questions 1, 2, 3 (a) (i)

These questions are assessed on AO1 – knowledge and understanding (4), and AO2 – application of knowledge (6). Last year it was reported that the message seemed to have got through that evaluation is not necessary in these questions, but this was not the case this year where evaluation was very common. There continues to be a tendency to under-answer these questions and top band answers are uncommon. The best prepared understood the importance of providing a clear definition of the term/ concept and referred to directly relevant sociological examples and writers. Direct, detailed focus on the question and named, relevant sociologists are essential for top band.

Questions 1, 2, 3 (a)(ii)

These questions are assessed on AO1 – knowledge and understanding (12), and AO2 – application of knowledge (8). Centre effects were evident in answers, many structured very well with detailed identification of relevant points and supportive sociological evidence. It is still the case that some wasted time evaluating this evidence, but this was not common. The use of anecdotal evidence rather than sociology was prevalent.

Questions 1, 2, 3 (b/c)

These essay questions are marked on all three skills: AO1 – knowledge (13), AO2 – application (13) and AO3 – evaluation (14). AO3 continues to be the weakest skill. Well prepared candidates demonstrated they understood the importance of using relevant sociological writers, concepts and evidence which was analysed and evaluated appropriately. Most provided a clear introduction and conclusion, though not all. Examples of excellent, sustained, explicit evaluation were still relatively uncommon. Increasingly, centres appeared to have provided 'templates' or 'model answers' for candidates and as always, these templates do not always allow candidates to engage fully with the question and as such, may penalise the most able and confuse the less able candidates . .

Option 1 – Crime and Deviance

Q.1 (a) (i) Responses to this question were weaker than expected. Very few received full marks, or even top band for this question. A significant minority was unfamiliar with the term chivalry thesis and so unable to provide a clear and detailed definition or refer to relevant sociologists. The majority of responses to this question attempted to evaluate chivalry, discussing feminist perspectives of women being treated more harshly by the criminal justice system (double deviance). Furthermore, many discussed chivalry as a feminist perspective of gender in the criminal justice system, including referring to Otto Pollak as a feminist! There were also many dubious statistics bandied about.

A number of candidates failed to attempt this question, or gave irrelevant responses. Several discussed the broad definitions of chivalry and gender inequality, rather than specifically focusing within the context of the criminal justice system. Candidates should consider spending a little more time on this question, developing their points/examples fully. It is also worth noting that definitions of any commonly used concepts can be used for this question.

- Q.1 (a) (ii)** The range of quality of responses varied significantly for this question. It is clear that many centres had prepared candidates well for this, whilst others had not anticipated age as a potential 20 mark question, so struggled to apply sociological theory and concepts to age and crime with many discussing gender, class or ethnicity and crime, or resorting to their knowledge of education. That said, it appeared that many were anticipating this question, providing a wide range of sociological theories, concepts and evidence to support the discussion. Most were able to apply a range of relevant theory to age and crime, drawing on elements of subcultural theory, postmodernism, Marxism, interactionism and functionalism, generally applied well to age.

Many were able to select appropriate theory and evidence, including concepts such as status frustration, strain and edgework, but struggled to link these explicitly to age and crime. A large number of responses was focused on social class, with only minimal and infrequent links made to age and crime. Many discussed white collar crime, but struggled to link this to age patterns of crime. Some answers focused on recorded crime rather than age groups actually committing crime and there were some accurate and some not so accurate statistics. Where referred to, there tended to be a lack of understanding shown in terms of cautions, ASBOs etc. Surprisingly, a small number of did not attempt this question. Several had limited or even no sociology in their answers relying on generalised 'common-sense' explanations and anecdotal evidence.

- (b)** This essay was by the less popular choice with candidates and was generally answered less well than 1(c). There were significant differences in the quality of responses to this question. Some demonstrated a detailed (though not necessarily wide-ranging) knowledge and understanding of social class in the context of crime. Most took the approach of evaluating Marxist theory, which worked well. The best responses came from those who were able to effectively use both Marxism and a range of other theories in the context of the question, with reference to both working class and white collar crime. AO3 skills were particularly weak; most candidates only explained theory in the context of the question, with broad, basic judgements and arguments juxtaposed with other theories.

A majority offered very little in terms of judgements, conclusions or assessment of sociological theory throughout, and simply outlined the perspectives related to social class and crime with some explanation; this had a significant impact on awarding in the AO3 bands. A substantial number of felt that providing basic/limited and juxtaposed theoretical points was sufficient.

Conclusions tend to be generic and not actually answering the question, but simply briefly listing what has been mentioned in the essay again. Candidates from most centres would benefit from working on AO3 skills development including assessment, evaluation, making judgements and writing conclusions, as these skills were not demonstrated well in the responses to this question. Similarly, candidates need to be reminded that the command word 'discuss' does not just mean outline and explain social class and crime but to assess, evaluate and make judgements. A small number spent too long on this essay, limiting time spent on the other two questions.

Q.1 (c) A majority chose this question, and on the whole this question was answered this well, particularly in terms of AO1 and AO2 skills. It was the case that many centres had ‘predicted’ this question, with a variety of apparent templates on show. The majority were able to draw upon a wide range of interactionist theorists. There were significant variations between centres on the theorists drawn upon for this answer, the majority discussing Becker and Lemert, but with significant and quite impressive variations of other theorists used. It was clear a small number of centres had not taught interactionism in detail, therefore some struggled to add depth and range for this question, demonstrating only some or basic knowledge and interpretation of interactionist theories, before moving on to theories that they were better prepared for, but which failed to answer the question.

As with 1(b) a large number struggled to demonstrate AO3 skills in their responses for this question, and were only able to explain interactionist theory, with some basic judgement and evaluation of concepts. As is often the case with these theory essays, juxtaposition of different theories was the approach to AO3 skills, having few if any direct links or assessment of interactionist theories. As with 1(b), conclusion formulation was weak, with many simply reiterating the main content of the essay. This resulted in many essays being list-like and descriptive. It was a common error for responses to identify Left Realists, subcultural theorists and Marxists as interactionist theories. There were, however, some exceptional examples for this essay.

Option 2 – Health and disability

This section was answered by less centres than in previous series, however, the quality of many answers was impressive.

Question 2(a)(i)

This question was answered well, with some excellent knowledge of ‘disability’ and well structured responses in general.

Question 2(a)(ii)

This question was also answered well with candidates providing explanations of the relationship between ethnicity and health and illness that provided both range and depth.

Question 2(b)

The majority who did health opted for this essay, and as with the previous questions, answers were, on the whole, well-structured, addressing all three skills much more effectively than candidates answered 1 (b).

Question 2(c)

This theory essay was answered by very few. Answers were generally of a good standard.

Option 3 – World Sociology

It seemed that no centres chose this option, however, several answered these questions in papers where there were rubric errors. As such answers to all questions were very weak, with very little relevant sociology being included.

Summary of key points

In terms of administration, candidates should ensure that the front covers of their exam booklets are completed fully and accurately and even more important is numbering questions within the booklets.

Any student who has writing issues in exam conditions should arrange to have their paper word processed.

Centres must continue to be aware that any elements of the specification can be used to generate any question, avoiding limitations on what might be asked and limiting predictability.

Candidates also need to remember to include sociology in all their answers. Contemporary examples can be excellent but only when applied to relevant sociological theory/ concepts/ writers.

It is still the case that candidates should spend more time on the a(i) question. They should focus directly on the term stated in the question. A clear and detailed definition of the term is essential. Candidates should then strive to include relevant sociologists and make developed sociological points using examples where possible. It is worth spending 15-20 minutes answering this question.

It is also still the case that AO3 is the most underdeveloped skill. Candidates should spend time on developing this skill - working on evaluation, making judgements, writing mini-conclusions to paragraphs, forming meaningful overall conclusions, looking at how different theories interlink etc. This should certainly help improve performance in this unit.

1200U40-1 SOCIOLOGY (WALES) A2

General Certificate of Education

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Advanced Subsidiary/Advanced

UNIT 4

SOCIAL INEQUALITY AND APPLIED METHODS OF SOCIOLOGICAL ENQUIRY

General Comments

The paper was accessible to all candidates. The higher tariff questions provided candidates with the opportunity to demonstrate higher order skills. Lower tariff questions furnished candidates with opportunities to demonstrate accurate knowledge and understanding. The examining team reported that there were some rubric errors and some handwriting issues in scripts. Candidates should write the numbers of the questions they have answered on the front of the answer booklet but almost none did so. The examining team urges examinations officers to request candidates enter the numbers of the questions they have answered on the front of the answer booklet at the end of the examination.

In section B, the characteristics of responses to both essay options were very similar. All but the very best struggled to demonstrate high level AO3 skills in essays in both essay options. The standard of English was mixed. Some were able to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding and, in higher tariff questions, they demonstrated their ability to weigh up and comment on sociological ideas. However, some struggled to communicate effectively and often failed to match the higher mark band descriptors.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Compulsory section A

- Q.1 (a)** Marks for this question were lower than expected for many candidates. Examiners found that many were unable to accurately interpret the item. Teachers and candidates have consistently been advised about the importance of context in this question. And yet, when asked about the reasons why the researchers chose to use different types of interview candidates often offered generic answers, not connected to the types of interviews used by the researchers as described in the item. Had they assimilated the synopsis of the research, they would have noted that the different types of interviews used in the research were online and face to face. Both types were quantitative. This was a survey, the purpose of which was to collect quantifiable data so that comparisons could be made with previous surveys and any change in attitudes identified. Many wrote about unstructured versus structured interviews and wrote at length about qualitative, rich data and validity. They assumed that the face-to-face interviews were unstructured, thereby missing the most likely reason the researchers used face to face interviews with the younger participants. This question was an excellent test of the candidate's ability to interpret the item and apply their wider understanding of methods of sociological enquiry to the task. Many were not able to do this successfully.

Tip: Practice answering this type of question using short summaries of various types of research.

Q.1 (b) Many were able to offer a research design. Some were over rehearsed and therefore lacked context whilst others offered sound research proposals. Although still the weakest section of the designs, sampling was slightly better than in previous years and because the brief asked for quantitative data, most proposed a quantitative data collection method. This enabled many to score good marks for AO1. However, many failed to score high marks for AO2 and AO3 because their justification for their decisions lacked detail, context, or both.

Similarly, many candidates failed to outline the potential problems with their proposed design and what the impact of these problems might be on the quality of the data collected.

Once again context is key in this question. This must be evident throughout the proposed design as outlined in the wording of the question. Examiners observed some issues with this question, reporting that some had started their research proposal with a lengthy introduction describing hypothetical secondary sources that they would read, which didn't add anything to their overall design. Sampling was the weakest section in the design, with many making generalised comments about "sending the questionnaire out on Facebook and Instagram" rather than deploying a recognised sociological sampling method.

Many candidates had clearly been taught to provide detailed examples of sociological studies as a part of their design, particularly when discussing unethical practices (Laud Humphries). It was frustrating at times to see so many writing about another study for over half a page and then failing to describe their own research design in sufficient detail. This is not required in this task.

Some candidates described their flawed research design and then in their final paragraph, provided an evaluation describing what they would do next time. This approach usually failed to provide a detailed evaluation of each stage of their design. They often offered a concluding paragraph which consisted of methods which weren't suitable for the brief. Candidates should be discouraged from adopting this structure as it is time-consuming and usually fails to generate any additional marks.

Tip: At **each stage** of the proposed design, candidates should state what they propose, explain why this is appropriate for the brief, outline the methodological strengths of their choice, the weaknesses of the choice and the potential **impact** of the problems associated with the weaknesses on the quality of the data they collect.

Section B

Q.2 (a) Most candidates were able to offer examples of inequality/class inequality from two areas of life. It was evident that some centres had misunderstood the task as answers lacked actual empirical evidence or merely cited statistics. As in previous series, some evidence cited was not appropriate for illustrating inequalities; this was particularly the case where education was used.

Candidates appeared to be confused between difference and inequality. For example, many talked about differences in attainment, but this is only relevant if it is linked to unequal treatment, or opportunity and, evidence [studies] should be offered in support of this. So centres should take care when preparing candidates for this question and beware of examples and evidence that focus on difference rather than inequality. The best answers cited relevant research evidence rather than anecdotal accounts of inequality. Similarly, the best answers referred to a range of evidence and this evidence was explained in the context of how it demonstrated inequality. Theoretical explanations for why the inequality exists were not required.

Teachers are advised to encourage candidates to read the instructions in the questions very carefully. A significant number relied on examples rather than evidence and this prevented them from achieving band 4 marks.

Candidates are required to explain what the evidence shows and part of their AO2 mark is awarded for the appropriateness of the evidence offered.

The best answers demonstrated range and detail whilst weaker answers lacked either detail, range, or both.

- Q.3 (a)** As this was an open question, candidates were able to choose the dimension[s] of inequality as well as the areas to demonstrate the inequality chosen. The same problems applied to this question as to 2a in terms of the appropriateness of the evidence selected. Candidates need to have a clear understanding of what inequality means. Markers reported that more CANDIDATES than usual cited examples of age inequality. Unfortunately, most of the examples provided were mainly anecdotal. Candidates from some centres provided evidence of inequality from the USA.

Tip: Be guided by old revision books and look for new, up to date evidence to bring this up to date. For example, there is plenty of dated research evidence for gender inequalities in family life; look for the same sort of research but more recent. The same applies to other areas. There is a lot of new research about inequalities in most areas of social life so try to use this.

- Q.2 (b)** This was a popular choice. However, many candidates had little knowledge or understanding of Weberian explanations of social inequality. Many wrote superficially about class, status, and party, without demonstrating a clear understanding of these concepts in relation to social inequality. AO3 was often characterised by juxtaposition rather than explicit evaluation of Weberian ideas so that essays often resembled class notes instead of rich discussion and evaluation of Weberian ideas.

Few discussed Weber's ideas about market situation and social inequality. Some said that Marx criticised Weber, seemingly unaware that Marx predated Weber and was in fact dead when Weber was writing. Others said that Weber was a Marxist. Nevertheless, there were some well-informed, competent responses to this essay.

- Q.3 (b)** This was also a popular choice, but responses were also mixed. Many failed to interpret the specifics of the question. Instead of examining whether gender is the most significant factor in social inequality, they described what feminists say countered by what functionalists or Marxists say. The focus of the discussion was often lost. This impacted on AO2 and AO3 marks. Some wrote 2a/3a type answers describing gender inequality in different areas of life. This approach to the task was acceptable, but only if the response also examined other dimensions of inequality with a view to interrogating the view in the question. Descriptive and one-sided accounts of gender inequalities failed to score high marks for AO2 or AO3.

Summary of key points

1. Candidates should read the instructions on every question carefully so that you understand the task.
2. Context is key in section A.
3. Read the commands carefully. Understand what they mean. Marks are linked to these commands.
4. Understand the difference between evidence, examples, and theory.
5. Use evaluative language in essays and stay focussed throughout.



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