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# **GCE EXAMINERS' REPORTS**

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**GCE (NEW)  
SOCIOLOGY  
AS/Advanced**

**SUMMER 2022**

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### **Annual Statistical Report**

The annual Statistical Report (issued in the second half of the Autumn Term) gives overall outcomes of all examinations administered by WJEC.

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# **SOCIOLOGY**

## **General Certificate of Education (New)**

**Summer 2022**

### **Advanced Subsidiary/Advanced**

#### **UNIT 1 – ACQUIRING CULTURE**

##### **General Comments**

The examining team was, on the whole, satisfied with the standards achieved in this series of examinations. Indeed, standards achieved by some candidates were exceptional and teachers and centres should be congratulated on the quality achieved.

The majority of candidates were able to demonstrate some knowledge and understanding of the topics covered. The very best answers demonstrated the higher order skills of analysis and evaluation most effectively.

There were however some very brief responses to essay questions and where this was the case it had a significant impact on the total mark for the paper.

When constructing discussions, the best candidates made good use of empirical evidence and contemporary debates. Many essays were well structured, logical and focussed.

Centres are advised to remind candidates to take careful note of command words so that they respond appropriately in their answers. Where an assessment is required the answer should not be descriptive in tone.

The level of English and, where appropriate, Welsh was good.

##### **Comments on individual questions/sections**

###### **Question 1**

###### **Section (a)**

Most candidates were able to demonstrate some knowledge of the meaning of secondary socialisation. However, some failed to consider both dimensions of the term. Most candidates remembered to make some reference to the item, however, those who merely copied directly without manipulating the content in some way were not rewarded. This was often the reason why candidates failed to achieve full marks for this question.

###### **Section (b)**

Centres are advised to take careful note of this report and of previous reports to ensure that candidates understand the requirements of this question. There were many very accomplished responses to this question that demonstrated sound knowledge and understanding of the process of socialisation and the ways that socialisation can influence the development of gender roles. However yet again, examiners reported that a number of candidates wrote in very general terms about what socialisation is rather than how it happens.

Examiners reported that a number of candidates were unclear about the meaning of the term agents of socialisation and this, unsurprisingly, had a negative impact on their answers. Candidates did not always use the item effectively to illustrate their answer and some made no reference to it at all. Some candidates presented rehearsed answers about socialisation without taking account of the focus on gender. This prevented their answer from being fully rewarded even where the processes were accurate. So, candidates should take care to offer relevant examples rather than generic ones.

## Section B

### Option 1 : Families and Culture

- Q.2 (a) (i)** Most candidates were able to define the meaning of the term and to offer examples to illustrate their understanding.
- (ii)** The key to high level success in this question is to offer two sociological reasons supported by evidence. This is what the question demands. Many candidates were able to match the top band descriptors and offered two sound sociological reasons supported with evidence. They then went on to explain the reasons offered. However, a number of candidates offered common sense anecdotal reasons or offered reasons that were not supported by evidence and/ or explanation. This had an impact on the mark awarded.
- (b)** This question was answered well by some candidates but once again there were a significant number of weak answers in which it was evident that candidates did not understand the focus of the debate. The best answers accurately identified the view in the question and focussed on outlining, analysing and evaluating it. Answers that merely wrote descriptive accounts of conjugal roles did not score highly in AO3. If candidates describe alternative ideas without offering any evaluative points they will not score highly in AO3. Centres should be advised that a significant number of candidates were unable to construct effective discussions. There was often a distinct lack of evidence to support or reject an idea and as a result candidates failed to secure high level marks for AO3. A number of candidates seemed to struggle with high level analysis and evaluation and centres should be aware of the importance of these skills. Descriptive accounts of opposing theories do not allow candidates to achieve high marks for AO3. A significant number of candidates presented essays that were almost entirely one sided, arguing for the view in the question rather than debating it as the command words required. Some candidates lost focus and did not use their knowledge effectively in the context of the debate. Very dated evidence was often used which is a particular problem in this type of debate because it relies on evidence and examples from “contemporary UK society”. Few candidates utilised research on same sex relationships where there is evidence of equality. This would have enhanced the debate significantly. Similarly, more recent research on the role of men in families would have enriched the discussion. It was interesting to note that in the demographic change question, candidates waxed lyrical about the changing role of women. They talked about women’s freedom, independence and choice. And yet when discussing conjugal roles, they cited studies from the 70s and 80s in their essays. Essentially this was a feminism essay and a debate between feminist and functionalist ideas featured here. However, it was rare to see the various branches of feminism discussed. Nevertheless, there were some very well written answers to this question and these were appropriately rewarded.

- Q.2 (c)** This should have been a very straightforward examination of one of the key sociological theories. Many candidates had knowledge of functionalist ideas about the family and described them. However, many failed to point out the strengths and weaknesses of these ideas and frequently juxtaposed different ideas. To evaluate functionalist ideas about the family it might have been useful to consider feminist ideas and claims. This would have balanced the debate and offered the opportunity to make a judgement about functionalism. Marxist and postmodern ideas had a place in the debate. To make a judgement about a theory the candidate must do more than describe it or indeed describe alternative ideas. So, higher order skills were the weakest.

### **Option 2: Youth Culture**

- Q.3 (a) (i)** Most candidates were able to define the meaning of the term and to offer examples to illustrate their understanding.
- (ii)** The key to high level success in this question is to offer two sociological reasons supported by evidence. This is what the question demands. Many candidates were able to match the top band descriptors and offered two sound sociological reasons supported with evidence. They then went on to explain the reasons offered. However, a number of candidates offered common sense anecdotal reasons or offered reasons that were not supported by evidence and/ or explanation. This had an impact on the mark awarded.
- (b)** On the whole, this section was reasonably well attempted and there were some very good answers. The question allowed students to utilise a wide range of knowledge and on the whole the quality of answers was higher than in the family option. Where students failed to score highly this was, unsurprisingly the result of weak higher order skills. Also, this question demanded an examination of contemporary ideas about youth subcultures. Many answered concentrated on spectacular youth cultures studied in the 70s and 80s. Teachers are advised to focus on essay writing skills and in particular, the ability to demonstrate high level analysis and evaluation as this will enable students to access the highest marks.
- (c)** This essay was equally popular and many students were able to focus the term role. This enabled them to stay focused throughout and many answers demonstrated detailed knowledge and understanding. Once again, the higher order AO3 was the weakest of the three skills being assessed. Some candidates described Marxist ideas and failed to evaluate them. The same points made about essays in the family option regarding skills also apply here. There descriptive accounts of alternative theories that demonstrated sound knowledge but fell short of addressing the task. The Examination Team would like to thank centres for their efforts and hard work in preparing candidates for this examination. Exemplar material will be made available as soon as possible and teachers are welcome to ask for help and advice with this or any other module.

## **SOCIOLOGY**

### **General Certificate of Education (New)**

**Summer 2022**

#### **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. Teachers and candidates should be congratulated on the quality of work produced despite incredibly difficult circumstances as a result of the pandemic.

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 Q1c was perhaps more challenging than 20 mark questions in previous series.

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

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.

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.

A minority of candidates struggled with effective time management, with some failing to complete the final essay question which attracts 30 marks, although in centres where candidates attempted the 30 mark question first, some candidates spend too long on the essay and ran out of time. This is possibly a reflection of the fact this cohort of candidates were unable to sit their GCSE exam papers as a result of the pandemic, in addition to differing experiences of the impact of COVID-19 on institutions and learners. Some candidates did not leave any space between their answers and any many included a number of extra points written in margins/around text, which was difficult to read.

Some continued their initial answer at the end of the script with no indication of the question being answered. This again possibly reflects lack of exam practice as a result of the pandemic.

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

There were more rubric errors than in 2019, again perhaps reflecting the cancellation of exams as a result of the pandemic. The level of English and, where appropriate, Welsh was good.

## **Comments on individual questions/sections**

### ***Question 1 - Compulsory***

- Q.1 (a)** Most candidates had been well versed in how to respond to this question. Many candidates had some understanding of the term reliability. The stronger candidates defined reliability in detail and then provided two or three knowledge points to support their understanding. Some candidates made the link with quantitative data, however, a significant minority confused reliability and validity. This appeared to be a centre effect. While the majority of candidates used the item, a significant number briefly mentioned or copied the item to explain a point about reliability and this precluded them from achieving full marks. An alternative approach to securing full AO2 marks is to refer to the Item and include a reference to another appropriate study.
- (b)** The majority were able to identify at least one possible reason sociologists use semi-structured interviews and there were some pleasing responses. Candidates who achieved the highest marks clearly structured their answers into two separate reasons. However, a significant minority provided two very similar reasons with overlapping content. This was most likely to occur when reason one was to collect qualitative data and reason two was to ensure the data collected was valid. A common error involved a misinterpretation of the concept reliability. A significant minority did not draw upon relevant studies or examples used to explain a reason, preventing full AO2 marks. Some candidates confused semi structured interviews with unstructured referring to research that has used unstructured interviews. Also, some candidates did not refer to or, made very brief references to the item, resulting in lower AO2 marks. 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.
- (c)** Some centres' candidates were clearly less familiar with focus groups; however some candidates responded by using the item as a clue and made some relevant points as a result. In some answers focus groups were confused with interviews and sometimes participant observation. As a result the answers varied significantly in breadth and depth. More candidates were able to identify the weaknesses of focus groups effectively with some able to balance this with a detailed range of strengths – this imbalance was 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 referred to appropriate concepts such as qualitative data and validity, referring to the item, but these concepts were sometimes undeveloped. There was some misuse of the concept reliability.

Some candidates continue to assume the concepts representativeness and generalisability are characteristics of the method rather than the sample. Stronger candidates made effective use of the item and referred to studies that used focus groups; these studies were contextualised in relation to the question, with some candidates embedding the studies in discussions of strengths and weaknesses. A significant minority of candidates incorrectly assigned focus groups to a sociological study.

## SECTION B

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

#### *Compulsory question*

- Q.2 (a) (i)** A pleasing number of candidates understood the data and wrote very good answers, effectively engaging with and interpreting the data. However, some did not provide accurate interpretations of the data; a typical misinterpretation was: 'boys achieved 71% in reading' as opposed to '71% of the boys achieved the expected standard in reading'. A significant minority of candidates gave reasons for the data, which was not required. Those who scored lower marks tended to briefly state a percentage rather than calculate a difference e.g. between males and females, resulting in descriptive answers. Stronger answers referred to an overall difference between the two groups and then made accurate references to other trends. It might be useful for candidates to describe the pattern, support with evidence from the graph and then refer to any percentage/percentage point differences.
- (ii)** The majority of candidates provided two reasons for the relationship between gender and achievement. Popular explanations included: feminism, anti-school subcultures, labelling and gender socialisation. Some focused their answers on gender and subject choice, rather than gender differences and achievement. Strong answers referred to sociological reasons which were outlined, explained and supported with reference to writers or studies, for example Mitsos and Browne, Mac an Ghail, Francis and Skelton. Lower achieving candidates made little or no reference to studies. This was the question on the paper where many candidates used dated studies to support reasons for female underachievement. While the candidates were rewarded for including evidence many had to grapple with the contradictory evidence in the item. Candidates could draw on their knowledge and understanding required in the debates section of the specification to answer this question. Many candidates produced clearly structured answers. There is no requirement for evaluation and no requirement to provide an opening paragraph describing trends. A minority of candidates provided more than two reasons, and this would have impacted on timing elsewhere.

- Q.2 (b)** This was a very popular essay question and required candidates to discuss Marxist views of education. There were many pleasing responses. Higher scoring candidates were able to discuss a range of Marxist explanations and to examine these in detail, with Althusser, Bowles and Gintis, Willis and Bourdieu the most likely references. Some candidates didn't evaluate throughout producing very descriptive explanations of Marxism. 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 taken from Functionalist, feminist, interactionist, postmodern and New Right critiques. For some candidates 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 generally well addressed, with a variety of responses. There were fewer excellent answers than **Q.2 (b)**. Many candidates had a breadth of knowledge about how labelling might impact educational achievement, however lower achieving candidates neglected a consideration of the impact of labelling on different ethnic groups. Also, there was a missed opportunity to evaluate in a sustained manner. Stronger candidates considered labelling as the main variable influencing educational achievement of different ethnic groups while also effectively considering influences outside the school and different influences inside the school such as the curriculum. Some responses were one sided, leading to lower AO3 marks. Some lower achieving answers were anecdotal. The majority of evaluation continues to be juxtaposed and candidates would benefit from further practice of this skill. There were nevertheless some very high quality responses which drew upon a range of studies such as Wright, Gillborn and Youdell, Mac an Ghail, Mirza. 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 the influence of the media on voting behaviour. Stronger answers referred to an overall trend noting television as the greatest influence on how all age groups, including those aged 18-24 chose to vote in the 2017 election and then made accurate references to other influences. Many made comparative points between the different media sources. Some candidates were able to refer to percentage point differences gaining extra AO2 marks. Some candidates 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.

- Q.3 (a) (ii)** Higher achieving candidates clearly identified two media effects 'models' which were outlined, explained and supported with reference to studies for example: hypodermic model: Marcuse, Morgan, two step flow model: Katz and Lazarsfeld; uses and gratification model: Blumer and McQuail. 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 students 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 models in insufficient detail. A significant number of responses relied heavily on common sense ideas and anecdotal references and examples. Such answers did not score high marks.
- (b)** This was an accessible but less popular question on the paper which required candidates to discuss the view that media representations of age is based on stereotypes. To do this effectively candidates need to consider the evidence with commentary on what the evidence suggests. The highest achievers maintained a clear focus on two age groups and gained marks accordingly. Most candidates 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 the views of pluralists, neo-Marxists interactionists and successfully considered how variables such as class, gender and ethnicity impact on the media representations of age. 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)** The focus here was on a consideration of sociological theories of the social construction of the content of the news. This was not as popular as 3b. Many candidates were familiar with the pluralist, traditional Marxist, neo-Marxist views, feminist and postmodern views. There was a tendency for lower achieving candidates to produce descriptive rather than analytical responses. A minority focused on media ownership without making it relevant to the focus of the question. The best answers understood the notion of social constructionism and examined a range of sociological theories pertaining to the content of the news. Some candidates 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 common sense answers, assertive answers, lacking reference to empirical evidence and/or theory.

The best answers adopted an evaluative tone throughout and made a judgement in their conclusion.

### Option 3 – Religion [less popular option]

#### Compulsory question

- Q.4 (a) (i)** Despite being attempted by few candidates, most understood the data and gave good answers. Higher scoring candidates referred to an overall pattern, for example the respondents described as Muslim were most likely to practice their religion; 79% of men described as Muslim practiced their religion, compared to 82% of the women; this is a 3% 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 of candidates continue 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)** High achieving candidates clearly identified two ‘reasons’, for example structural reasons focusing on men’s commitment to work leaving less opportunity for religious involvement, also risk behaviour: the notion that women are more risk averse than men and less willing to risk there is no ‘god’. The best answers referred to sociological reasons which were outlined, explained and supported with reference to writers or studies, for example Glock and Stark, Miller and Hoffman, McAllister. 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 students 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 a number of reasons in insufficient detail.
- (b)** Few candidates attempted this question although most candidates who attempted the question had knowledge of the view that the UK is a secular 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 secularisation lacked breadth and depth, although most answers contained some knowledge, with references to the church attendance, secularisation, disengagement, ‘spiritual shoppers’. Those who scored the highest demonstrated an understanding of the intricacies of the secularisation debate and were able to offer alternative perspectives such as ‘believing without belonging’; the role of religion in immigrant communities. 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)** Few candidates attempted this question. The focus here was on a consideration of a range of sociological explanations for the role of religion in society. High achieving candidates successfully considered different explanations in addition to studies such as Durkheim, Marx, Brice, Gramsci, O'Toole. There was some tendency towards answers that lacked breadth and depth of knowledge, however higher achievers grappled with competing sociological explanations. 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.

\*To ensure precision, it might be helpful if candidates were advised that reliability has a specific meaning in sociology.

### **Question 1 (b) 2/3/4(ii)**

Candidates who achieved the highest marks clearly structured their answers into two separate points.

### **Question 2 /3/4(a)(i)**

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

## **SOCIOLOGY**

### **General Certificate of Education (New)**

**Summer 2022**

#### **Advanced Subsidiary/Advanced**

#### **UNIT 3 – POWER AND CONTROL**

##### **General Comments**

Overall, Unit 3 responses were of a lower standard than previous series although there were still some excellent answers with many candidates clearly well prepared for the unit. Both failure to attempt questions and rubric errors were more common than any other previous series.

Option 1 – Crime and Deviance continues to be by far the most popular option (96% + of centres), 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 seems to be most. For this series, adaptations were made to the high tariff 40 mark questions, in that centres were aware that only limited theories and explanations would be their focus.

Most candidates allocated their time well between the three questions, although, as with previous series', candidates could spend more time on the ai) question.

Sometimes illegible handwriting continues to be an issue for markers and centres are advised to contact the WJEC and potentially look at making alternative arrangements for candidates in these cases. Marks cannot be awarded if markers are unable to decipher answers. 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.

It is still the case that many students did not write which questions they had attempted on the front of their examination booklet which then takes examiners some time to complete.

##### **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). The message seems to have got through for the most part that evaluation is not necessary in these questions. There continues to be a tendency to under-answer these questions and top band answers are uncommon. The best prepared candidates 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 candidates wasted time evaluating this evidence. 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 candidates provided a clear introduction and conclusion, though not all. Examples of excellent, sustained, explicit evaluation were still relatively uncommon. Many centres appeared to have provided ‘templates’ or ‘model answers’ for candidates, particularly as a result of the adaptations and both essays being focused on theory. These templates do not always allow students to engage fully with the question and as such, penalise the most able candidates and confuse the less able candidates.

## Option 1 – Crime and Deviance

- Q.1 (a) (i)** Responses to this question were weaker than expected – a mean mark of 4/10 was awarded. Very few candidates received full marks for this question. Few candidates were able to provide a clear and detailed definition of institutional racism and utilise the work of relevant sociologists. Some candidates defined ‘racism’ and then defined an ‘institution’ but failed to grasp what institutional racism actually was. Many candidates failed to include any directly relevant named sociologists with more naming less relevant sociologists such as Stuart Hall and Paul Gilroy. That said, many candidates made reference to the Macpherson Report and stop and search patterns, with some development and link to institutional racism. However, also common, was the idea that the murder of Stephen Lawrence was an example of institutional racism rather than the way it was dealt with. Many candidates therefore failed to understand the significance of this example. Many responses mentioned canteen culture, but often without linking this to institutional racism and without linking it to a specific sociologist. A not insubstantial minority of candidates failed to include any named sociologists, theory or evidence. Some candidates tended to lack focus and to discuss racism in education and work, therefore failing to properly address the question. A number of the lowest-band responses wrote just a few lines describing racism with a limited if any sociological theory or concepts. Most candidates did not provide a sufficiently detailed response for this question for the top bands. Candidates should consider spending a little more time on this question, developing their points/examples fully.
- (ii)** As with 1ai, answers were weaker than in previous series with a mean mark of 9.9/20. The range of quality of responses varied significantly. It was clear that some centres had not overtly taught this, limiting the depth of responses provided by candidates. A significant number of candidates just gave a broad description of how crime is measured, such as the CSEW and self-report studies, without considering the question, which specifically asked about the problems with official crime statistics.

Contd.

Q.1 (a)

(ii) Many candidates therefore simply described ways of collecting data on crime, while others described the perspectives different theories have on official statistics, all of which did not respond to the demands of the question. A number of candidates were unaware of what constitutes official statistics which led to confusion. A large number of responses included no named sociologists/theorists, and failed to consider aspects such as gender, social class, labelling etc, without any depth or links to sociology. Most candidates failed to access the top bands for this question and did not demonstrate a detailed understanding of the problems with official statistics. It is possible that some centres did not anticipate this question thus limiting the depth of responses provided by candidates. Centres should again be reminded that all possible areas of the syllabus could be included in this question. Some candidates used evaluation which is not credited in this question. A small number of candidates achieved top band answers, these provided significant depth of evidence, concepts and theory all directly related to problems with official statistics. The best answers selected a range (at least 3, usually more) of problems with official statistics on crime using sociological evidence and examples that directly related to these problems, providing detailed explanations of that evidence. There were some very good discussions of chivalry thesis, institutional racism, white-collar and corporate crime, labelling and police influence and how these issues impact on the accuracy of official statistics.

(b) This essay was by far the more popular choice with about two thirds of crime and deviance candidates opting for it. It was generally answered well, perhaps 'predicted' by teachers, and many candidates were able to demonstrate a detailed knowledge and understanding of feminist theories of crime and deviance, though many approached this as a 'gender and crime essay' with reference to both male and female crime and less focus on feminism. Template answers were more common than usual. A significant number of candidates were unable to distinguish between feminist sociologists, from sociologists exploring gender. A significant amount of responses only focused on explanations of gender patterns and crime, rather than specifically assessing feminist theory. Many candidates however were able to demonstrate detailed knowledge of sociological theories and concepts, achieving top band for knowledge and understanding, with some excellent descriptions of Heidensohn's control theory, Carlen's deals and Smart's 'double deviance'. Again however some candidates referred to both Talcott Parsons and Otto Pollak as feminists, though some used sex role theory and chivalry thesis well as evaluation. A significant number of candidates offered very little judgement of feminist theorists, conclusions or assessment of sociological theory throughout, and simply outlined the perspectives with some explanation, this had a significant impact on AO3 bands. A substantial number of candidates felt providing basic/limited and juxtaposed evaluative points was sufficient. The most successful candidates provided a detailed exploration of feminist theory and evaluated with a range of alternative perspectives. Many candidates felt providing basic/limited and juxtaposed evaluative points were sufficient thus, only providing basic or limited judgements.

- Q.1 (c)** This theory question was a significantly less popular option but again, stronger candidates showed detailed knowledge of a range of subcultural theories and could interpret and evaluate the ideas and concepts at a high level, sustaining these skills throughout their answers. As with 1b, clearly some centres had provided model answers for a question on subcultural theories of crime which were attempted with varying degrees of success/accuracy. Stronger answers offered detailed, often quite complex explanations, weaker answers were simplistic and brief. Many weaker candidates gave a descriptive account of functionalism, with little if any reference to specific subcultural theories. Therefore, many responses lacked detail and evidence of understanding. A significant number of responses only included one or at most two subcultural theorists and as a result failed to provide a wide-ranging discussion of the subcultural theories of crime. A large number of candidates simply gave a descriptive account of subcultural perspectives, only offering basic juxtaposed evaluative points, lacking detailed evaluation. More than any other question, there was a number of errors of attribution with many candidates confusing points made by functionalists, Marxist, realists and interactionists. Moreover, a number of sociologists were wrongly identified as subcultural theorists. Although most candidates provided a generally good explanation of subcultural theory, they failed to develop these or directly evaluate theory. There appeared to be a general lack of understanding of how other theoretical perspectives can be applied to subcultural theory. Although generally the knowledge of subcultural theory was very good, there were a small number of candidates who focused on the formation of anti-school subcultures explored in unit 2, or why youth subcultures are formed as studied in unit 1, rather than specifically focusing on deviant subcultures. When candidates attempted to evaluate, it was often in the form of a single strength and weakness, or simply by juxtaposing subcultural theories with other perspectives. A significant number of responses failed to apply and interpret points in the context of the question, therefore appeared to simply list the various sociological theories with a description of what they say resulting in a lack of application and interpretation and application, impacting on overall marks. A few candidates forgot the focus of the question and just produced page upon irrelevant page about what causes crime. The majority of conclusions remain weak.

## **Option 2 – Health**

- Q.2 (a) (i)** This question was answered relatively poorly, with a mean mark of 3.4 being awarded.
- (ii)** This question was not answered well with candidates achieving a mean mark of 6.4.
- (b)** All students who did health opted for this essay, but overall, answers were very weak with a mean mark of 12.7.

No candidates opted for Q.2 (c)

### Option 3 – World Sociology

- Q.3 (a) (i)** There was a range of quality of answers for this question with many lacking sociological knowledge that specifically addresses the meaning of development as in the context of world sociology. As a result, several responses were generalised, making minimal reference to relevant sociological writers, concepts etc. Again, Africa was referred to as a country rather than a continent in numerous responses. Few answers contained a clear development, however, theories such as Rostow's theory of development were used well. This was the only ai question with a mean mark over 5/10.
- (ii)** Answers to this question ranged from reasonable to very limited in terms of sociological knowledge. Very few students were able to refer to a number (at least 3) of relevant pieces of sociological evidence/ examples and use them to explain the relationship between war and conflict and inequalities in the developing world. Few candidates appeared to understand global demographic trends accurately. The war in Ukraine was frequently referenced but with little link to the question. The weakest answers again lacked any reference to sociology and again examples were vague (Africa often cited as a country again). However, a minority of students were able to write confidently about rape being used as a weapon of war, damage to infrastructure, effects on migration, use of child soldiers etc. The mean mark for this question was just less than half marks (9.9/20).
- (b)** This was by far the more popular choice when it came to the essays and it produced some of the highest quality responses of any of the essays on this paper. A good number of candidates provided answers which demonstrated a very good wide-ranging and detailed knowledge and understanding of modernisation theory, evaluating the perspective from numerous angles. Weaker candidates wrote a more generalised response about several non-exact theories/ explanations of inequality in the developing world.
- (c)** This was a much less popular choice when it came to the essays (just selected by 3 candidates). Not all candidates understood what was meant by 'Marxist' theories in the context of world sociology. Evaluation tended to be weak, theories often muddled.

## Summary of key points

In terms of administration, candidates should ensure the front covers of their exam booklets are completed fully and accurately.

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

Centres must 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. This was however slightly different this year in terms of adaptations to the b and c questions. Candidates 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. Candidates 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.

## **SOCIOLOGY**

### **General Certificate of Education (New)**

**Summer 2022**

#### **Advanced Subsidiary/Advanced**

### **UNIT 4 – SOCIAL INEQUALITY AND APPLIED METHODS OF SOCIOLOGICAL ENQUIRY**

#### **General Comments**

The examining team was, on the whole, satisfied with the standards achieved in this series of examinations. Indeed, standards achieved by some candidates were exceptional and teachers and centres should be congratulated on the quality achieved.

The majority of candidates were able to demonstrate some knowledge and understanding of the topics covered. The very best answers demonstrated the higher order skills of analysis and evaluation most effectively.

There were however some very brief responses to essay questions and where this was the case it had a significant impact on the total mark for the paper.

When constructing discussions, the best candidates made good use of empirical evidence and contemporary debates. Many essays were well structured, logical and focussed.

One problem this year was the high number of pre rehearsed, pre-planned research designs. These were generalised and lacked context. The purpose of the research design task is the application of knowledge and understanding to the specific task in the paper. One size does not fit all here.

Centres are advised to remind candidates to take careful note of command words so that they respond appropriately in their answers. Where an assessment is required the answer should not be descriptive in tone.

The level of English was, on the whole, acceptable.

#### **Comments on individual questions/sections**

**Q.1 (a)** Most candidates were able to identify reasons why the researchers decided to use secondary data in their research.

The key to success in this question is context; being able to pick out the specific strengths of the method which might have been useful in helping the researchers to achieve their research aims. Many students offered generic and often inaccurate answers. Few candidates scored full marks for this question, largely because of the failure to contextualise their response.

**Q.1 (b)** Once again examiners reported that there were a significantly high number of rehearsed, generic research designs. In this examination students were required to design a research proposal to collect data on the extent and reasons for part time working. Many students selected a qualitative method even though there was a requirement for some quantitative data here. Candidates frequently failed to contextualise their justification, preferring instead to list the strengths of the method. Whilst the strengths of the method are relevant, they also need to be contextualised. In other words, an explanation of the reasons why the chosen method was particularly useful for the research in question. Whilst research decisions often demonstrated some accurate knowledge, those that were not explained in the context of the design brief had limited value. Many made assumptions in this particular design brief. Many selected students in the 6th form of their school as the target population reflecting the generic nature of some of the designs, even though, in this brief, that target population made sense. Sampling was yet again the weakest part of most designs. In some cases, there was a misunderstanding of the brief with students stating that their study was a pilot study or trial run, which then limited the scope of their design as well as the justifications provided for their choices.

Examiners reported that some candidates had been taught to refer to comparative examples of sociological studies in their research design. They discussed in some detail the problematic nature of Laud Humphreys' 'The Tea-Room Trade' for example, which was unnecessary and time consuming for them in relation to their writing during the exam. Many of the responses failed to contextualise their designs and the discussion of sampling techniques and ethics was often very rehearsed. There was also a generalised use of the phrase "to increase validity and reliability" without any relevant explanation or justification. And, one decision rarely increases both validity and reliability. Decisions usually enhance one at the expense of the other. Candidates should also be advised to keep their designs as realistic as possible, as several candidates mentioned paying a day's wage for participants and even providing counselling.

The biggest problem this year was the predominance of pre rehearsed research designs that took no account of the design brief.

Whilst many centres appear to have established a sound understanding of the task the same cannot be said for the success criteria. Indeed, the quality of responses to this question was, overall, very average. Nevertheless, some answers did demonstrate an excellent understanding of both research procedures and the reasons for the decisions made. Some candidates were able to connect their decisions to the task and to wider methodological issues and these candidates were rewarded accordingly. However, a significant number merely described their research design offering very superficial justifications which were often pre-prepared and generalised. Many design justifications focused more on the generic strengths of the method rather than the reasons why this method was the best for the task.

The best answers considered most of the stages of research and offered methodologically sound reasons for decisions made whilst weaker answers made either superficial or no reference to some stages of the research design.

Some designs were unrealistic and as such demonstrated a lack of engagement with the task. Some candidates wrote a great deal about why they had not chosen to use other methods which was not required.

Many candidates cited problems but did not consider the impact that these might have as the brief had instructed them. This year a significant number of designs cited “being an A Level Sociology student” as the biggest problem. Whilst it is clear that being a student limits the scope of the design there are numerous opportunities to discuss the specific problems of the proposed design and the impact of these problems on the data collected.

Candidates should be advised that the best answers are clearly contextualised demonstrating a sound understanding that decisions about research design should be focused primarily on the research aims as detailed in the design brief.

## Section B

**Q. 2 (a)** Most candidates were able to offer examples of class inequality from two areas of life. It was evident that some centres had misunderstood the task as answers lacked actual empirical evidence or cited statistics. Some evidence cited was not appropriate for illustrating inequalities; this was particularly the case where education was used. Candidates seemed confused between difference and inequality. For example, many talked about differences in attainment but this is only relevant if the reasons for the difference is unequal treatment and this can be supported with evidence 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. Teachers are advised to urge students to read the instructions in the questions very carefully. Where they are asked for two areas of life they need to select two different areas of life. A significant number of candidates relied on examples rather than evidence and this prevented them from achieving band 4 marks.

Centres should be advised that candidates are not required to explain why the inequality exists. They 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)** The same issues were evident in this question as they were for 2a.

**Q.2 (b)** This was a popular question and most answers contained an accurate account of what functionalists say about social inequality but few examined the two dimension of functionalist ideas as outlined in the question. Functionalist ideas had to be the focus here rather than a descriptive account of theories of inequality. That being said, it was expected that answers would consider alternative ideas so that a judgement of the value of functionalist ideas could be made.

Very few candidates utilised evidence or examples as vehicles for evaluation of the theories described and this meant that their AO2 and AO3 marks rarely reached top band. Teachers would be wise to focus on the ability of students to effectively demonstrate all three skills. We have consistently reported that descriptive account of theories will not enable students to access the higher marks for AO2 and AO3.

- Q.3 (b)** This question was also popular and offered the opportunity for candidates to demonstrate wide ranging, detailed knowledge of theories of social inequalities in an evaluative debate. Unfortunately, responses were mixed. Some were indeed detailed and wide ranging whilst others were basic and undeveloped.

Yet again very few candidates utilised evidence or examples as vehicles for evaluation of the theories described and this meant that their AO2 and AO3 marks rarely reached top band. Teachers would be wise to focus on the ability of students to effectively demonstrate all three skills. We have consistently reported that descriptive account of theories will not enable students to access the higher marks for AO2 and AO3.



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