

# GCE 2003

## *January Series*



## Report on the Examination

### **Sociology**

- 
- Unit 1 SCY1/Unit 2 SCY2/Unit 3 SC3W & SC3C  
Advanced Subsidiary
  - Unit 4 SCY4/Unit 5 SC5W & SC5C/Unit 6  
Advanced

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Registered address Addleshaw Booth & Co., Sovereign House, PO Box 8, Sovereign Street, Leeds LS1 1HQ.

AQA was formed by the merger of the Associated Examining Board (AEB)/Southern Examining Group (SEG) and the Northern Examinations and Assessment Board (NEAB).

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# Sociology

## **General comments on AS units**

Most candidates obeyed the rubric and appeared to have had enough time to finish their answers. Responses varied from those of thoroughly prepared, knowledgeable candidates who were able to show well developed skills, to those who seemed to have little acquaintance with sociological findings or concepts – relevant or otherwise – and little awareness of sociological debates. A greater proportion of candidates now seem to be planning their answers, though these still remain a distinct minority. More careful and thoughtful planning would help candidates – especially, perhaps, the weaker ones – to achieve a more focused, organised and analytic response to questions.

There were a small but significant number of scripts where candidates' writing was all but illegible. Apart from testing examiners' patience, the risk is that valid sociological points may be missed. Centres would be very well advised to consult AQA as to the options open to such candidates to ensure that they are able to present their work to their maximum benefit. On a similar note, centres should encourage candidates to write in black or *dark* (rather than light) blue ink. A large number of candidates are failing to complete the front of their answer books (for instance failing to fill in question numbers or the paper reference). Examiners would greatly appreciate the cooperation of centres in ensuring that candidates complete these necessary details and thereby reduce the risk of administrative errors that may disadvantage candidates.

## **Unit 1 SCY1**

### **Question 1: Families and Households**

- (a) Most candidates were able to explain the term adequately, usually in terms of the nuclear family meeting the essential needs of industrial society. However, some found it difficult to explain clearly, and/or gave lengthy examples instead of an explanation or definition.
- (b) Most found this straightforward, commonly identifying lone parent families and reconstituted families.
- (c) Most performed well here, with reasons such as later childbearing, greater availability of contraception and women's career opportunities as an alternative to motherhood.
- (d) Some weaker answers ignored the 'criticisms' and outlined two features of functionalism (usually a list of functions). Some others ignored the instruction not to use the criticisms that were in the Item. More successful candidates usually pointed out that functionalists ignore the 'dark side of family life' or women's oppression.
- (e) The best answers were familiar both with a number of relevant policies or laws that may affect family life (child support, child protection, adoption, divorce, taxes/benefits, abortion, contraception, etc) and with a number of sociological views (feminist, New Right, etc) that they were able to apply to these policies (eg through concepts such as family ideology, patriarchy, culture of dependency, etc). Others were deficient in one or both these areas. Divorce was the law or policy most commonly cited, though some tended to drift quickly into a 'causes of divorce' answer rather than focusing on the question.

- (f) Many weaker candidates were unable to go very far beyond what they found in the Item. Better-prepared candidates were able to present some relevant empirical material from studies, eg Gershuny, Oakley, or Ferri and Smith. Some were able to apply appropriate perspectives on conjugal roles, but sometimes without focusing on the question of change. The best answers went beyond the division of labour to consider issues such as domestic violence or decision making and kept a clear focus on the question of whether there had been any change in men's and women's positions.

### ***Question 2: Health***

- (a) Most candidates were able to define or explain this term satisfactorily.
- (b) Examples here included variations between groups in definitions of illness, disabled access (or lack of) to premises, etc.
- (c) Most candidates coped well with this question, often using points derived from McKeown, though some wrote excessively long answers for their 6 marks.
- (d) The commonest answers were doctors themselves, and employers or capitalism. Candidates generally were able to explain their points effectively.
- (e) In general, answers showed a reasonable knowledge of some appropriate material on access to health care. Better answers were able to extend the range of groups considered (to class, gender, ethnicity, age, region), but many limited themselves to only one of these. A common tendency was to drift into a discussion of unequal health chances with little linkage to care. The best answers included a range of explanatory concepts such as institutionalised racism, patriarchy, the inverse care law, different types of care, etc.
- (f) Most answers made use of the Item, though weaker ones showed little understanding of it and were reduced to paraphrasing, often with errors. In general, candidates were better at putting forward labelling explanations of mental illness than structural ones (despite the Item), but many candidates could see no clear difference between these two approaches (for example, “many ethnic minorities experience stress and are labelled schizophrenic”). The best responses dealt with more than one type of social group, put forward a range of explanations and evaluated them appropriately – often in terms of a clearly organised debate between structural and labelling approaches.

### ***Question 3: Mass Media***

- (a) Almost all had some implicit understanding of the term, but a significant number struggled to formulate this clearly enough. Often, such answers failed to convey the idea that a stereotype involved the assumption that all members of a group shared a common characteristic. Some gave lengthy but ultimately unilluminating examples.
- (b) Generally candidates coped well, with reasons such as the social context of the violence, catharsis etc.
- (c) Some had difficulty here, with little to offer other than a vague idea of “newsworthiness”. Better answers included examples such as reference to elite persons, personalisation or relevance to the home culture.

- (d) Most were aware that the method was the laboratory experiment and were aware of some of its drawbacks as a means of studying media effects, such as artificiality, ethical issues, control of extraneous variables, problems measuring long-term effects, etc.
- (e) Age and disability were rarely chosen. Most candidates chose ethnicity and sexuality, but unfortunately most of those choosing sexuality mistook it for gender and so were unable to present much relevant material or (despite the best efforts of examiners) to gain much credit. By contrast, many candidates knew and could apply a good range of material on media representations of ethnicity. Weaker candidates fell back on anecdotes and overdrawn generalisations (“the media *always* portray black people as...”). Good answers had relevant empirical material on a range of media or genres.
- (f) There was a marked tendency to drift from the question of bias in news selection and presentation into a general discussion of media bias – often on the part of candidates who lacked any substantial knowledge of studies of news production. These tended to present a variety of perspectives, with little reference to news beyond the opening paragraph. Not surprisingly, such answers made little use of the Item. Better answers were familiar with a range of relevant material on news and were able to discuss both selection and presentation issues. Most were written from within a Marxist versus pluralist framework, but some introduced feminist or postmodernist views. Commonly cited sources included Hall et al, Galtung and Ruge, and the GUMG studies.

## Unit 2 SCY2

### *Question 1: Education*

- (a) Most candidates had some understanding of the hidden curriculum (eg that it was outside the National Curriculum), but some were unable to convey the informal nature of the learning/teaching involved. Some indicated the function of the hidden curriculum rather than saying what it was.
- (b) This was generally well answered, with candidates often suggesting hierarchy and punctuality.
- (c) Most were able to put forward three reasons, such as socialisation, teacher labelling, peer group pressure, etc. Some made the mistake of putting forward the same reason twice (eg boys are socialised one way, girls are socialised another), for which they only scored once.
- (d) Many candidates identified some alternative explanations but were unable to explain how these were criticisms of labelling theory. The most popular criticism was that labelling is over-deterministic or that pupils may reject labels rather than fulfil them. A significant minority failed to understand the word ‘theory’ and proceeded as if the question were about criticisms of the labelling *process* (eg that it is unfair). These failed to score. Some wrote about ethnicity (usually via Fuller), not class.
- (e) Although a minority did not know what ‘policies’ were, others had a good knowledge of a range of educational policies (such as the 1944 and 1988 Acts, compensatory education, higher education policies, equal opportunities initiatives, streaming, etc), and were able to explain their effects on achievement clearly. Unfortunately, many of these made little or no reference to sociological views. Some others presented a prepared answer (usually on either explanations of under-achievement, or on the role of education). While these often contained a fair amount of sociological material, it was not always well linked to the question.
- (f) Many weak answers did little more than re-present material from the Item. Some of these were unable to differentiate between ethnic minorities and thus went on to make sweeping generalisations, often based on common sense or worse. Some other candidates simply ‘adapted’ their knowledge of class and achievement to the question. Thus, apparently, Bernstein wrote about the working class *and* ethnic minorities speaking in a restricted code. These unconvincing responses did not score well. On the other hand, many candidates were able to present a range of relevant family and cultural factors, often with supporting research evidence. Evaluation was often more implicit than explicit, usually by listing a range of other possible factors or explanations rather than generating any debate or discussion as to their relative importance.

### *Question 2: Wealth, Poverty and Welfare*

- (a) A few mistook “relative” for “absolute”, but most offered a suitable explanation.
- (b) The most popular reasons given were training, recruitment incentives and skill levels.
- (c) Candidates were less successful here, but acceptable answers included language differences, lack of education and discrimination by employers. Some suggested that poverty was transmitted from parents but did not explain why the parents were poor.
- (d) A significant number appeared confused as to what wealth is – for example, conflating it with income. Some had clearly not studied this topic and instead gave two problems of measuring

*poverty*. Better answers identified concealment, fluctuations in the value of assets, whether pension rights were wealth or not, etc but were often unable to explain their points clearly.

- (e) There were some excellent answers to this, dealing with all three providers of welfare and discussing a range of issues, such as welfare pluralism, funding, accountability, two-tier provision, care in the community, patriarchy etc, often relating these to different sociological perspectives. Some who seemed to know little about types of provider offered accounts of aspects of the history of the welfare state or drifted into theories of poverty. A few had a basic knowledge of types of provider but provided no real sociological context for this.
- (f) Most candidates could provide a basic account of Marxist views of poverty, though the coverage of *wealth* was often minimal. There was considerable variation in the quality and quantity of these accounts: from rich and detailed to thin, error-ridden and insubstantial. Many candidates were able to contrast Marxist and other (usually New Right) views of poverty (though not of wealth), but few were able to develop this evaluatively, instead simply listing the different approaches rather than developing an explicit debate between them.

### ***Question 3: Work and Leisure***

- (a) Most candidates were able to answer this correctly (eg in terms of worker efficiency), but some defined “production” instead of productivity.
- (b) Most could suggest two appropriate reasons, such as cultural practices or employer discrimination.
- (c) Candidates generally suggested reasons such as lack of money or of workmates to socialise with, having more leisure time, etc.
- (d) Although some found this difficult, popular reasons included illegal working or some (eg married women) not signing on as unemployed.
- (e) The weakest answers relied heavily on commonsensical ideas about why people get bored at work. Many of the more sociological answers were basic accounts of Blauner’s study, sometimes with a point or two derived from Marx. Among the better answers was to be found a range of material on alienation and work satisfaction, drawn from Goldthorpe and Lockwood, Braverman, Gallie and others and featuring concepts such as deskilling, the division of labour, cultural factors, the privatised family, technology, workers’ orientations, etc.
- (f) Some of the weaker answers were merely recycled versions of the Item with little or nothing added and often with misunderstandings of the material. More successful answers showed a reasonable sociological knowledge and began to offer alternative views (usually Human Relations) of the organisation and management of work. The best responses showed a good grasp of a range of alternative approaches (Salomon, Handy, McGregor, Herzberg, etc) and of related concepts and issues (capitalist ideology, pro-management assumptions of scientific management, neo- or post-Fordism, industrial conflict, applicability to different types of industry, etc).

## Unit 3 SC3W

### *Question 1: Sociological Methods*

- (a) Most candidates could offer an appropriate explanation of ‘triangulation’. A few had little or no idea about the term.
- (b) Very few candidates failed to gain at least two marks and many gained maximum marks on this part-question. Issues most commonly raised were a low response rate, the possibility of incomplete responses and respondents possibly misunderstanding questions and not having the researcher present to clarify issues. In some cases candidates presented these issues in a way that lacked clarity and consequently lost them marks. For example, identifying ‘response rate’ as an issue but crucially not referring to a ‘low response rate’.
- (c) Most candidates successfully identified one appropriate problem and many identified a further two problems. Most commonly, candidates mentioned problems of access, participation, gaining trust and safety. Where candidates failed to score maximum marks, this was often due to straying into problems that could not be construed as ‘practical’.
- (d) Few candidates failed to score at all in this part-question, but many had an unclear or undeveloped understanding of a ‘longitudinal’ approach, often simply seeing it as ‘a study carried out over a long period of time’. Candidates also often found it difficult to articulate some of the advantages and disadvantages they identified, having particular difficulties in explaining the benefits of repeating a study with the same sample. Very good answers successfully identified and explained advantages such as the creation of comparative data or using the same sample and disadvantages such as sample attrition or funding issues. This perhaps illustrates the need for centres to encourage candidates to practice the ‘identify – explain’ format, paying particular attention to the ‘explain’ task.
- (e) There was a range of responses to this part-question from some extremely effective answers to some very weak answers that indicated little understanding of secondary data. Although official data was covered in most answers, stronger responses presented an analysis of qualitative data as well, meeting the demands of the wording of the question – ‘different kinds’ of secondary data. The most effective answers also made appropriate and accurate use of important concepts such as reliability, validity and representativeness. As in the past, not all candidates could apply these concepts in an appropriate fashion, with many candidates appearing confused as to their meaning or conjoining validity and reliability. Strong answers also presented material in a theoretical framework or drew direct comparisons with primary data. Weaker responses were often limited to a rehearsed account of one form of secondary data, tending to be list-like or descriptive. The very weakest answers tended to show little understanding of secondary data, using the question as an opportunity to present a ‘catch-all’ response describing a range of methods.
- (f) Most candidates seemed to be well prepared for this question and there were many examples of high quality responses. The strongest responses exhibited a detailed understanding of unstructured interviews presented in a theoretical framework and utilised appropriate concepts in an accurate manner. Evaluation tended to be more prevalent than analysis and even strong candidates were sometimes unable to explain fully the characteristics, advantages and disadvantages that they identified. More moderate answers tended to present a list of apparent advantages and disadvantages with limited discussion, analysis or evaluation. There were few examples of very weak responses that were very limited in length or which repeated a few basic points about interviews. A few candidates did not differentiate between interviews in general and unstructured interviews.

## Unit 3 SC3C - Coursework

### *General comments*

The entry for AS coursework was slightly larger than January 2002 but nevertheless remained a very small entry, with two-thirds of candidates re-submitting coursework which had been worked on following the summer results. Any generalisations, therefore, need to be considered with caution. A greater number of proposals fell into the very good bracket and this was reflected in the allocation of top grades. Nevertheless, the quality of work varied, with some candidates failing to demonstrate the criteria required for access to the top and middle bands of the mark scheme. The proposals that scored high marks did so by focusing on the hypothesis/aim in a precise and relevant manner throughout. As in the entries for summer 2002, some candidates continued to digress considerably from what was often a confusing aim or hypothesis. This often led into a method section which lacked clarity and hence presented possible difficulties for implementation. Almost all candidates followed the recommended structure and titles given in the specification. The standard of marking has improved, though there are still a substantial number of centres which are consistently generous in their marking. All centres whose marking has been adjusted would benefit from contacting their Coursework Adviser. Details are available from AQA.

### *Length of Coursework*

Most candidates produced coursework proposals between 1100–1300 words in length. Fewer candidates exceeded the number of context pieces in the second section, thus presenting more balanced proposals than last January. Some centres continued to allow candidates to submit coursework which does not provide a word count for each section or a total word count. Most candidates carefully kept within the recommended word length for each section. The majority of coursework was word processed and secured with treasury tags. Some centres still allowed candidates to put their work in plastic wallets or/and folders, which placed an additional and unnecessary burden on the moderators. Some candidates included the articles used and a bibliography; neither is required for AS coursework.

### *Ethical Issues*

Candidates continued to demonstrate sensitivity to ethical concerns. A minority, however, continued to plagiarise material, copying their context/concepts section from standard textbooks.

### *Administration*

There was a distinct improvement in the submission of the required paperwork. However, there was a consistent weakness when completing the Candidate Record Forms. On some occasions the candidate failed to sign it and/or on the reverse the teacher did not give a clear explanation for the rewarding of particular marks.

### *Assessment Criteria*

#### *Hypothesis or Aim*

As in January 2002, there were more proposals which focused on aspects of the specification beyond the Family and Education, no doubt a result of candidates now having studied more areas of Sociology. In line with the mark scheme, most candidates were able to score in the 3-5 band by giving some reasons for their choice and limited relevant background information. However, they were not able to identify one appropriate and practical aim or hypothesis. Better candidates offered a relevant sociological focus and aim and related to it directly throughout the rest of the proposal. Some candidates remained confused by the difference between an aim and a hypothesis. If a candidate demonstrated a flawed understanding of a hypothesis from the start, this generally remained

throughout the whole proposal and prevented access to the top bands for other sections. Candidates would benefit from understanding that broad aims are often too ambitious and frequently complicate, rather than clarify, research proposals.

### ***Context and Concepts***

This section is still over-marked by several centres. Many candidates offered more than two sources, some of which have inserts (either as a table or chart) with tenuous links to the study. Weaker candidates often offered a list of concepts, which varied in quality, sociological relevance and were generally underdeveloped. The main failure of lower scoring candidates was leaving the concepts implicit by only defining them.

### ***Main Research Method and Reasons***

Most centres have taken seriously the advice to choose only one method but there are still some centres that allow candidates to present several methods. Focusing on only a single method encourages candidates to relate directly to the sociological focus and aim. Some candidates continued to offer a generalised or free-standing discussion of methodology with little or no reference to their own proposal. Using a list of several advantages taken directly from a textbook resulted in candidates offering generalised, rather than specific, reasons for the method adopted and, for some, this section became a mini-essay on methodology. Higher scoring candidates continued to demonstrate sensitivity and applied their chosen method explicitly to their proposed study. Some candidates would benefit from spending more time on explaining how they intended to operationalise the method (eg piloting, sampling) to increase marks.

### ***Potential Problems***

Candidates found this the most challenging section and the weaker ones continued to regurgitate a list of generalised disadvantages for their method and failed to make any specific reference to either their aim or the sociological focus. A small number of centres encouraged candidates to use a bullet point approach without elaborating on the points made. Candidates would benefit from consideration of practical, ethical and, if relevant, theoretical issues in relation to their method. Candidates are not required to provide alternatives. High scoring candidates were able to present problems which considered areas with specific links to their own research, and were therefore able to develop a critical framework around more than just issues of practicality.

## Unit 4 SCY4

### *General comments*

Candidates overwhelmingly favoured the Sociology of Religion option within this Unit. However, regardless of which topic was chosen, there were still some very basic and practical issues that caused candidates to underachieve. On the other hand, there were also some very sophisticated answers that demonstrated good sociological imagination and a clear use of a range of sources, rather than reliance on one text or one approach. Whilst most candidates were able to realise that the 8-mark question could be tackled in a short time, there were still a significant minority who wrote a side or even more on this answer. They generally gained the full 8 marks but to the detriment of every other part of the question.

Candidates would be advised to spend a little more time considering the implications of the 12-mark question. Top band answers in all three topic areas were altogether rare. This response should be very tightly focused, discussing briefly the relevant issues and illustrating the answer with one or two examples. The whole answer should take approximately 20 minutes and candidates would benefit from practising this skill outside of the examination room.

A general feature of the longer essay-type questions was the recurring problem of candidates who were determined to demonstrate their knowledge-base regardless of the exact wording of the question. Hence, candidates were unable to shape their sometimes-extensive knowledge and be selective in the way they answered questions. Most issues arose in this category from the question on voting behaviour.

A further generalised weakness was the lack of chronological awareness. Many candidates have an imperfect understanding of concepts such as ‘the last twenty years’. On a more positive note, however, it was good to see an increasing number of candidates who demonstrated awareness of religions other than Christianity in the Religion answers.

### *Section A: Power and Politics*

#### *Question 1*

- (a) Candidates relied heavily here on generalised comments about women in general rather than specifically mentioning topics that related to the Item, such as personnel issues or policy issues.
- (b) There was a clear tendency here for candidates to misread the question and demonstrate their knowledge of Marxism rather than the “arguments put forward” by pluralists. Weaker candidates did not move beyond Dahl; better answers started to focus on issues such as pressure group politics and the neutral role of the state connected to recent policies. The best answers were able to illustrate their answer briefly, for example from pressure group campaigns.

#### *Question 2*

This question was the more popular choice for the Power and Politics essay and illustrates one of the fundamental problems still remaining for candidates, at all ability levels. Too many answers in this category were generalised or list-like expositions of early class-based models juxtaposed with some, not particularly well expounded, recent material, mostly Crewe. There was little clear sense that candidates were able to engage clearly with the issues of economic, cultural and ethnic factors. The title was therefore dealt with at an implicit level. However, small attention to wording and details would have made a significant difference to many candidates. Candidates who were able to make reference to the 2001 election were rewarded.

**Question 3**

The few candidates who did tackle this question merely listed the differences between the Labour party and the others. There was little clear sense that candidates understood the term ‘ideological differences’ and little awareness of the variety of political parties that exist.

**Section B: Religion****Question 4**

- (a) Candidates were able to maximise their knowledge of the supposed collapse of religion and employ their conceptual base here. Full marks often went to those who employed ideas such as rationalisation or the growth of NRMs. Some were sidetracked into discussion of postmodernism but most utilised the Item well and demonstrated good skills of selectivity.
- (b) Candidates struggled to tackle the key dimension of this question – namely that of authority. The degree to which this concept was addressed was the usual discriminator as to the eventual mark. Better candidates were able to address issues such as fundamentalism and the inevitability of religion argument. These candidates also recognised the different approaches to authority such as personal values or the concept of social control. However, there were weaker candidates who simply presented timeless classical theoretical juxtaposition or standard decline of religion material, without reference to authority.

**Question 5**

The most common answer to this question focused on decline of religion material with brief references to ethnic minority religions. Such answers were rarely successful and the ethnocentric nature of many of the answers concerned with world religions was a real cause for concern. Some better answers could relate ethnic minorities to issues such as religious affiliation and theodicy of disprivilege but the candidates who were able to score well on AO2 marks were few.

**Question 6**

This question produced some excellent answers that combined sophisticated theoretical and empirical links, in particular to contemporary examples. The classical theoretical arguments were clearly recognised by most candidates and those who were able not only to discuss the classical theories of Weber and Marx but also to employ a sound conceptual base scored well. Top band answers frequently had a good understanding of neo-Marxism and combined that with issues of feminism whilst all the time maintaining a focus on the central issues of social change.

**Section C: World Sociology****Question 7**

- (a) Candidates were able to interpret the term ‘cultural changes’ in a very wide sense and were rewarded for this. Answers covered education through to the Internet and the growth of tourism. Most were able to provide the relevant evidence and scored well.
- (b) This caused more problems than part (a) as candidates resorted to generalised knowledge rather than sociological arguments. Some answers were of the journalistic variety, simply listing ‘bad western influences’. Candidates who used the Item with care and developed ideas such as exploitation of labour forces and resources were able to demonstrate a good depth of understanding of development issues.

***Question 8***

In answering this question candidates were frequently able to relate their knowledge of modernisation theories and dependency theories to the question. The better answers employed an excellent range of empirical examples, including development of the theory of globalisation. The question allowed candidates to demonstrate their knowledge of the complexity of the development process and those who had little empirical evidence to draw on found it difficult to gain good marks.

***Question 9***

Of the two World Sociology questions, a small number of candidates tackled this one and it produced very weak answers. Some were extremely generalised accounts of what they considered to be educational issues, but usually were not, whilst others tried but failed to adapt their development theories to the topic. Again, the key to a solid answer lay in a clear use of relevant concepts and a sophisticated range of empirical and contemporary examples.

## Unit 5 SC5W – Theory and Methods

### *General comments*

Overall, the standard of entry was similar to the summer; however many candidates appeared to be less well prepared, providing sketchy answers to Questions 2 and 3. Lack of theory and/or relevant studies was a major drawback to the essay questions. There was, in addition, a tendency to write prepared answers to questions that were, at best, only tangentially related. Some candidates continued to give an “all I know about theory” answer.

Weaker answers to the first question often showed that the candidate had not read the question fully.

### *Section A*

#### *Question 1*

- (a) The better answers noted the small scale, in-depth nature of case studies. Many candidates conflated case studies with participant observation, stating that it *was* participant observation rather than that it *could be*.
- (b) Weaker answers failed to identify points relevant to a lone researcher specifically and many candidates did not mention how the practical problem would affect the quality of the research. Some candidates assumed that the question was looking for problems of participant observation. Some candidates did not make the two parts of their answer clear.
- (c) Many candidates focused on the word framework and how this practically constrained the research process – as though it were a check-list. Better answers focused on the “theoretical” part of the question and went on to talk, for example, about quantitative versus qualitative research.
- (d) Many candidates covered a range of relevant strengths and weaknesses of unstructured interviews. Better answers covered both the theoretical and practical points and included references of relevant studies.

### *Section B*

#### *Question 2*

One type of weaker answer focused on the contribution of feminism as a political movement as opposed to feminist theory and research. Other answers focused on the different types of feminist theory (lacking depth), with little or no reference to relevant research or its contribution to understanding society. Some candidates juxtaposed different perspectives with little awareness of the demands of the question. It was striking how many candidates had problems spelling feminist when it was in the question. Better answers addressed theory, and the contribution of feminist research into substantive areas such as crime, education and the family. Some candidates focused on research methods. Where this was made relevant and linked to the question they were rewarded, but weaker answers of this kind often turned into an “is sociology a science?” answer.

#### *Question 3*

Some candidates seemed to equate social surveys with official statistics or questionnaires. Few candidates seemed aware of the different types of survey and some gave no examples of research at all. Many (but not the majority) gave the census as the only example. Better answers focused on the key features of surveys such as large scale research, quantitative data, can be used as secondary data and related these to such issues as reliability, representativeness, and validity.

## Unit 5 SC5C – Coursework

### *General comments*

The January entry for SC5C was very small and this is therefore a relatively brief report. Centres should read the summer 2002 report which provides a more detailed insight on how to improve the quality of coursework. Very few entries for January 2003 were re-sit candidates. This was the second entry for the new A2 coursework module and many candidates would have benefited from further study of Sociology before drafting their A2 coursework. Some coursework lacked depth and any real understanding and insight into the research process. Nevertheless, there was evidence that 2003 candidates had spent considerable more time on their coursework than January 2002 candidates. Centres had clearly learned from summer 2002 entries and acted on the advice provided by senior moderators at the coursework standardising meetings held in the autumn term. Some candidates produced outstanding work which reflected enthusiasm, ability and considerable sociological imagination.

There was less evidence of overmarking of coursework from centres, showing that teachers are more able to interpret the mark scheme accurately and to award appropriate marks. Candidates from many centres had clearly used their AS proposal as a pilot for their A2 coursework.

### *Context*

There were generally two types of context seen. Those that were very limited in scope and covered only two/three sources and concepts. Clearly candidates had elaborated on their AS proposal, which can be good practice, but without depth or direct reference to their aim/hypothesis. It was also rare to see a strong theoretical thread running through this section. Where candidates did include a wide range of contextual sources, the word count was also increasingly high and thus candidates failed to remain focused on their rationale. Centres should note that candidates would achieve higher marks by making explicit links to their context when conducting their analysis in the evidence section.

Higher scoring candidates demonstrated a very good knowledge and clear understanding of the sociological context of their study and chose highly appropriate sources that were well used and explicitly linked to the focus of their research.

### *Methodology*

This section was not as strong as the context section. Candidates still preferred a textbook-driven account with some links to the chosen study. Candidates often tended to stress the advantages of the chosen method over the potential problems. It was also evident that many centres were working to a fairly basic checklist of theoretical/practical/ethical involving little actual imagination in terms of the application of these to the chosen study. A surprising number of candidates simply identified ‘opportunistic’ sampling - even when it was clearly a quota method. Some candidates were able to operationalise their concepts in the construction of a questionnaire. A minority of centres still encouraged candidates to use more than one method, with the inevitable dilution of quality. One centre had encouraged all candidates to use triangulation: something to be avoided. In lower scoring work the reasons for choosing the method were often brief and superficial.

In higher scoring coursework candidates demonstrated a very good knowledge and understanding of their chosen method and offered a full and coherent discussion of reasons for the choice of method. They were able to demonstrate a good understanding of theoretical, practical and ethical considerations.

***Evidence (Application, Presentation, Interpretation & Analysis)***

This was often the weakest section of candidates' coursework. Such pieces of coursework were dominated by graphs, which lacked supporting sociological commentary. Some centres clearly over-marked this section. Comments suggest that some teachers do not understand the standard because they considered some candidates' work as "an excellent analysis of material", when in fact the candidate had done little more than present the findings and offer a basic link to the rationale. However, a minority of candidates were able to produce an excellent analysis; some centres had clearly drilled candidates well in this skill.

Higher scoring candidates selected an appropriate method from the outset, applied it with rigour and sensitivity and collected relevant and accurate data. The data was clearly presented and findings were accurately analysed and explicitly related to the aim/hypothesis.

***Rationale***

The quality and length of rationales continued to vary. Most candidates were able to produce a reasonably clear hypothesis with supporting aims and objectives, though some are unclear as to the difference between an aim and a hypothesis. Weaker candidates produced confusing rationales, which they subsequently failed to track through their research. Higher scoring rationales were succinct, relevant and explicitly linked throughout the study.

***Evaluation and Conclusions***

This was often a weak section in low scoring coursework. In such coursework it was often a short section providing a limited evaluation of the chosen methodology and data collected. Some candidates disadvantaged themselves from the outset by setting and chasing too many aims or objectives. Lower scoring work tended to be self-congratulatory and to offer a thin and unconvincing evaluation of their research.

Exceptional candidates were able to evaluate their own methodology whilst also referring to other sections of their research to indicate similarities and differences. This was always related to their rationale. It was pleasing to see a few candidates referring to their diary when analysing problems with their methodology.

In higher scoring research candidates were able to offer full and accurate evaluation of the method used and appropriate and logical conclusions were drawn. Such work provided viable and detailed recommendations for further research, informed by a very good grasp of the strengths and limitations of the study.

## Unit 6 SCY6

### *General comments*

A significant minority of candidates wrote very long answers to part (a) and even longer answers to part (b), leaving themselves with little time for part (c), despite the much greater number of marks attached to (c). Some did not read the questions carefully or follow the instructions contained in them, for example making reference to substantive areas that had not been specified by the question. In terms of the assessment objectives, AO1 was generally demonstrated more successfully than AO2, with candidates selecting, interpreting and applying material inappropriately (for example in catch-all answers that presented a range of material regardless of its relevance or otherwise to the set question) and candidates taking a descriptive rather than an analytic and evaluative approach, especially in part (c) (the essay questions).

### *Question 1: Crime and Deviance*

- (a) Many candidates seemed not to understand the term “theory” and, rather than identify criticisms of the theory, instead wrote (often at excessive length) about why labelling as a process was a ‘bad thing’. Those candidates who did address the question tended to identify the fact that labelling theory can be seen as deterministic and that those labelled may in fact reject the label. Some candidates pointed out that there are alternative ways of explaining deviance besides labelling, though not all these were successful in explaining how this was a criticism of labelling theory.
- (b) Some candidates chose to disregard the injunction in the question and wrote at length about deviance and *education*. However, most candidates chose to link deviance, order and control to families and households and/or religion. Many answers considered links with deviance without touching on issues of order or control. Better answers discussed issues of social control/order and family life through a ‘perspectives’ framework (usually functionalist and Marxist, but sometimes feminist), as well as making the more common links relating deviance to inadequate or inappropriate family socialisation. Many of the answers focusing on religion were also able to explore ideas of control and order via a functionalist/Marxist framework. A comparison of sects as opposed to established churches also figured in many successful answers that explored the links between religion and deviance. Almost all answers that went beyond ‘deviance’ tended to treat ‘order’ and ‘control’ as the same thing.
- (c) Weaker answers often concentrated on producing lists of the various practical difficulties associated with official crime statistics. Some listed problems with official statistics in general, with little reference to crime. Many candidates placed emphasis on reasons for the under-reporting of crime (and, to lesser extent, its under-recording), but often could not give this any theoretical context. Better answers succeeded in linking these points to theoretical critiques of official crime statistics (usually interactionist and Marxist, sometimes feminist) and to studies from such perspectives (eg on policing strategies and ethnic stereotyping, white collar crime, gender and under-recording etc). Unfortunately, this was rare, and instead many candidates chose to describe studies without explicitly relating these accounts either to broader perspectives or theories, or to the question of *crime* statistics. This was particularly the case for candidates who offered lengthy accounts of Durkheim’s and others’ views on suicide. On the other hand, some candidates showed good awareness of the different types of official crime statistics and how they are produced, and used this to develop appropriate evaluation.

**Question 2: Stratification and Differentiation**

- (a) A significant minority of candidates provided descriptions of studies that have tried to devise measures of social class, without directly answering the question. Successful answers discussed the exclusion of certain groups such as the unemployed, presented a Marxist critique of using occupation as a measure of class, or noted that classifications of particular occupations change over time, making comparison difficult.
- (b) Weaker answers were able to offer very little in the way of a critique of functionalist views on race and ethnicity. Candidates with a better knowledge often tended to present one or more alternative views of ethnicity (usually the underclass or divided working class theses) rather than engage directly with the question. Those who did attempt to examine some of the criticisms generally took a lead from functionalism's consensus assumptions referred to in the Item, criticising it from a conflict perspective. Occasionally, such responses drifted into a general account of functionalism and/or Marxism with only limited links to ethnicity. Another tendency was to write about ethnic minority life chances, with some reference to inequality or discrimination, but no real linkage to functionalism or other theories.
- (c) Most candidates chose to use material on families and households in their answers, sometimes with quite detailed discussions of issues such as conjugal roles, decision-making and domestic violence in relation to patriarchal power. By contrast, weaker candidates tended to list material on the family without reference to patriarchy. Other popular areas were the mass media and education, with discussions of gender representations, examination results and so on. Again, better answers were able to contextualise such issues in relation to patriarchy – for example, in terms of the extent to which men control media organisations. Many candidates took a descriptive rather than an analytic or evaluative approach to the question, in particular ignoring the issue of whether or how far patriarchal oppression *remained* the basis of society. However, some candidates adopted a more discursive approach, raising questions about how far patriarchy continued to be influential (eg pointing to issues such as changes in girls' educational achievements, conjugal roles or the number of women in paid work). Such answers often discussed different types of feminism and their applicability, while some used Marxist views to challenge the idea that patriarchy rather than capitalism was 'basic' to society.

## Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Unit/Component	Maximum Mark (Raw)	Maximum Mark (Scaled)	Mean Mark (Scaled)	Standard Deviation (Scaled)
Unit 1 (SCY1)	60	60	32.3	8.3
Unit 2 (SCY2)	60	60	30.3	7.8
Unit 3 (SC3W)	60	60	33.2	7.8
Unit 3 (SC3C)	60	60	36.3	7.1
Unit 4 (SCY4)	60	60	34.4	9.4
Unit 5 (SC5W)	60	60	29.4	8.5
Unit 5 (SC5C)	60	60	40.4	8.6
Unit 6 (SCY6)	60	60	27.4	8.5

For units which contain only one component, scaled marks are the same as raw marks.

### Unit SCY1/Families and Households; Health; Mass Media (12019 candidates)

	Max. mark	A	B	C	D	E
Scaled Boundary Mark	60	40	36	32	29	26
Uniform Boundary Mark	105	84	74	63	53	42

### Unit SCY2/Education; Wealth, Poverty and Welfare; Work and Leisure (7707 candidates)

	Max. mark	A	B	C	D	E
Scaled Boundary Mark	60	37	34	31	28	26
Uniform Boundary Mark	105	84	74	63	53	42

### Unit SC3W/Sociological Methods (3765 candidates)

	Max. mark	A	B	C	D	E
Scaled Boundary Mark	60	40	36	32	28	25
Uniform Boundary Mark	90	72	63	54	45	36

**Unit SC3C/Sociological Methods (955 candidates)**

	Max. mark	A	B	C	D	E
Scaled Boundary Mark	60	42	37	33	29	25
Uniform Boundary Mark	90	72	63	54	45	36

**Unit SCY4/Power and Politics; Religion; World Sociology (7282 candidates)**

	Max. mark	A	B	C	D	E
Scaled Boundary Mark	60	41	37	33	29	26
Uniform Boundary Mark	90	72	63	54	45	36

**Unit SC5W/Theory and Methods (1648 candidates)**

	Max. mark	A	B	C	D	E
Scaled Boundary Mark	60	38	33	29	25	21
Uniform Boundary Mark	90	72	63	54	45	36

**Unit SC5C/Theory and Methods (937 candidates)**

	Max. mark	A	B	C	D	E
Scaled Boundary Mark	60	46	41	37	33	29
Uniform Boundary Mark	90	72	63	54	45	36

**Unit SCY6/Crime and Deviance; Stratification and Differentiation (374 candidates)**

	Max. mark	A	B	C	D	E
Scaled Boundary Mark	60	40	36	32	28	24
Uniform Boundary Mark	120	96	84	72	60	48

## Advanced Subsidiary award

Provisional statistics for the award (1663 candidates)

	A	B	C	D	E
Cumulative %	17.1	37.6	63.5	81.5	94.8

## Advanced award

Provisional statistics for the award (162 candidates)

	A	B	C	D	E
Cumulative %	4.9	31.5	65.4	87.0	96.3

## Definitions

**Boundary Mark:** the minimum (scaled) mark required by a candidate to qualify for a given grade.

**Mean Mark:** is the sum of all candidates' marks divided by the number of candidates. In order to compare mean marks for different components, the mean mark (scaled) should be expressed as a percentage of the maximum mark (scaled).

**Standard Deviation:** a measure of the spread of candidates' marks. In most components, approximately two-thirds of all candidates lie in a range of plus or minus one standard deviation from the mean, and approximately 95% of all candidates lie in a range of plus or minus two standard deviations from the mean. In order to compare the standard deviations for different components, the standard deviation (scaled) should be expressed as a percentage of the maximum mark (scaled).

**Uniform Mark:** a score on a standard scale which indicates a candidate's performance. The lowest uniform mark for grade A is always 80% of the maximum uniform mark for the unit, similarly grade B is 70%, grade C is 60%, grade D is 50% and grade E is 40%. A candidate's total scaled mark for each unit is converted to a uniform mark and the uniform marks for the units which count towards the AS or A-level qualification are added in order to determine the candidate's overall grade.