

GCE 2004

January Series



Report on the Examination

Sociology

-
- Advanced Subsidiary
 - Advanced

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Sociology

General comments on AS units

The AS units elicited a range of levels of response from candidates, from the knowledgeable and focused to those who had clearly been unprepared for the examination. Candidates should be reminded of the need to plan their answers, especially in response to questions (e) and (f), and to avoid excessively long answers to questions (a) to (d), which carry fewer marks. Only a minority of candidates wrote brief plans for the longer questions, despite the obvious advantages of doing so.

Some candidates' writing was again all but illegible. It is in the best interests of these candidates that centres consult AQA in advance of the examination for advice on the options open to ensure that they are able to present their work to their maximum benefit. Likewise, centres should discourage the use of light blue ink and encourage candidates to use dark blue or black ink. Some candidates are also using highlighters, red or green ink, etc. This contravenes the paper rubric and should be firmly discouraged. Many candidates did not complete the details on the front of their answer booklets; centres' cooperation in ensuring that this is done would be greatly appreciated by examiners, and would 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 concept in terms of domestic labour or a caring role.
- (b) Most candidates identified two appropriate ways, such as domestic violence and control of finances.
- (c) The great majority of candidates had no difficulty in suggesting three functions, such as primary socialisation, sexual, reproductive and economic functions.
- (d) Some weaker answers identified two criticisms made by radical feminists, rather than two criticisms of their view. Successful answers usually used functionalist criticisms, but others used the idea that the family had now changed (eg to joint conjugal roles) and was no longer oppressive to women.
- (e) The weakest answers often sought to apply their knowledge of Willmott and Young's stages of family history to changes in the position of children, though usually with only limited success. Many reasonable answers were based on a description of changes, such as the introduction of compulsory schooling or child labour laws. The best answers brought the account up to date, for example by examining to what extent modern children had a childhood with the rise of media and advertising targeted at them. Many of these differentiated between children of different classes and genders and discussed the 'extent' of changes in childhood, not merely the reasons for changes, for example by examining how far childhood was now 'better' than in the past, using concepts such as dependency and age patriarchy.
- (f) Many weaker candidates were unable to add much to what they took from the Item, or wrote only about why couples divorce, rather than why there had been a *change in the rate* of divorce.

Others elaborated on legal changes but failed to consider any broader social changes. Some excellent answers combined a discussion of a range of legislative changes, ranging from a variety of divorce reforms through to legislation on child support, legal aid, domestic violence, with a discussion of other more general factors such as changing attitudes, secularisation, family diversity, women's independence, etc. These often came to an evaluative conclusion about the relative importance of legislation and other factors, sometimes via a discussion of sociological perspectives on divorce.

Question 2: Health

- (a) Many candidates had difficulty with this term, but most explained it appropriately as longstanding illness.
- (b) This was generally answered correctly, eg in terms of differences in life expectancy or morbidity, though often answers were too long.
- (c) Here, too, answers tended to be unnecessarily long, but few had any difficulty in suggesting three reasons, such as smoking, diet and working conditions.
- (d) This was generally answered fairly well, but some candidates failed to make clear what were the identified points and what were the explanations. Some reiterated answers to question (c) (on health *chances*), but most focused successfully on care. Answers included the idea that the middle class had better knowledge of the health care system and that there tend to be more doctors in middle-class areas.
- (e) In general, this was not very well answered. Most answers focused largely on health chances, raising points about genetics, poverty and lifestyle factors, to the neglect of issues relating to health care. Many weaker answers simply substituted either social class (on the assumption that all minorities are working-class) or other countries (usually Third World) for ethnic groups. In the absence of firm knowledge, a tendency to stereotype abounded. Few candidates considered institutional racism in the NHS and very few sought to distinguish between ethnic groups. Even fewer saw whites as an ethnic group.
- (f) The weakest answers tended to recycle material from the Item to little effect, sometimes before lapsing into an account of health inequalities or similar. In somewhat better answers, some candidates had difficulty maintaining a clear focus on the issue of social construction and tended to give accounts of potentially relevant material (eg on the sick role or mental illness) without relating this explicitly to the question. Some candidates produced competent answers that were somewhat limited by their neglect of disability. Better answers were able to discuss the social construction of disability as well as issues of what constituted being healthy (eg relating this to lifestyle and/or body shape) and definitions of illness, usually with mental illness as the example. Interactionist, feminist and Marxist theoretical frameworks helped structure the best answers.

Question 3: Mass Media

- (a) Almost all candidates answered this correctly, usually with the idea that the audience are passive/easily influenced or that the media can inject its ideas into them without resistance.
- (b) Many candidates opted for copycat violence as an effect, but some had difficulty producing a second effect. Others offered catharsis or desensitisation for example.
- (c) Information and diversion/escapism and company for the lonely or isolated were among the needs suggested, but many candidates failed to identify three. Some gave two or more versions of the same need (usually information).

- (d) Better candidates were able clearly to identify two criticisms and to elaborate on them. Usually these were the idea that needs come from the media in the first place and that the model uses a faulty methodology. Some weaker answers failed to make any criticisms or resorted to general criticisms about methods unlinked to the model. Some good answers cited ‘false’ needs, the imposition of categories by the researcher(s) and the individual/atomised nature of the model.
- (e) Most candidates had some sociological knowledge but this was confined mainly to gender, with very little on sexuality. Some stumbled on sexuality when discussing the representation of women but most comments on sexuality were limited to a few commonsense observations. There were some excellent accounts of gender representation in the media using a feminist framework and a range of evidence, eg from Ferguson, Meehan and Wolf. Few accounts touched on representation of males and there were a lot of very descriptive and commonsense accounts of various media output with little sociological content. The better answers were able to analyse the representations using concepts such as marginalisation, patriarchy, the male gaze and stereotyping as well as discussing the extent of changes. Many of these considered a range of genres or media.
- (f) Weaker candidates failed to identify what the pluralist view was, often ignored the Item and instead opted for a general discussion of bias with minimal reference to the question. Good answers were able to place their discussion in a theoretical framework, usually contrasting pluralist views with Marxist accounts. Concepts such as agenda setting, gatekeeping, ideology, and evidence from the Glasgow Media Group often figured. The best answers went beyond a simple juxtaposition of the two perspectives to engage in a running debate on how each one might support their own position and attack that of others.

Unit 2 SCY2

Question 1: Education

- (a) Many candidates had difficulty with this question. A few had little or no idea as to the meaning of the term, while others focused on inequality within the school (eg streaming) rather than on the idea that education operates to continue the social class system over time. Candidates who understood the concept often made the point by reference to how the education system ensures that working-class children end up getting working-class jobs.
- (b) This was well answered, with most candidates gaining full marks for reasons such as being able to afford to pay or having better knowledge of the system.
- (c) Most candidates were able to suggest three functions, such as socialisation, selection and training for work roles, though some gave two different versions of the same function (eg ‘socialisation’ and ‘teaching norms and values’). A few used legitimisation of inequality, despite the instruction in the question.
- (d) The majority of answers correctly identified two policies (1870, 1944 and various aspects of 1988 being among those favoured) and most were able to explain these satisfactorily. Where they failed to do so, this was often because they lapsed into a descriptive account of the policies’ provisions rather than showing explicitly how the policy affected achievement. A few candidates did not know what a policy was and chose concepts such as labelling instead.
- (e) Some excellent answers used a broad range of evidence, differentiated between and within ethnic groups (eg in terms of gender differences) and considered factors inside and outside school. At the other extreme were some very limited and stereotypical answers. These lumped all ethnic groups together and described a deficit model of ethnic minorities suffering poverty, having problematic family lives and speaking English badly. Some of these used the offensive and unsociological term ‘ethnics’; these answers universally failed to see white people as an ethnic group. Among those who had limited knowledge of ethnicity and education, some attempted, unsuccessfully, to compensate by ‘adapting’ material on social class (eg ‘Bernstein saw ethnic minorities as speaking the restricted code’).
- (f) Many weak answers did little more than recycle the material in the Item. More typically, however, candidates largely ignored both the Item and the question to produce a sometimes lengthy account of a whole range of in-school and out-of-school factors in no particular order and with little or no explicit analysis or evaluation. Some drifted into either an answer on other inequalities (eg gender) or into a discussion of functionalist versus Marxist views on the role of education that remained at best only implicitly relevant and more often tangential to the set question.

Question 2: Wealth, Poverty and Welfare

- (a) Most candidates offered a suitable explanation in terms of a benefit available to all, or one not depending on your income, etc.
- (b) The most popular reasons offered were lack of knowledge and addiction to drugs. Some focused on how income was spent inappropriately rather than why.
- (c) This was generally well answered, with candidates offering women as heads of lone parent families, earlier retirement, low wages, etc as the principal reasons for women’s greater likelihood of being poor.

- (d) Some candidates were able to identify reasons but unable to explain them clearly. The most popular reason given for low take-up of benefits was that of the stigma attached to means-tested benefits. Other reasons often given included lack of knowledge of their existence or of how to apply for them.
- (e) Some candidates gave a good, clear account of all three aspects and dealt with both measurement and definition. More typically, however, candidates were able to produce a satisfactory account of definitions of poverty and a limited amount on wealth. Some were unclear as to the difference between wealth and income. Others tended to confuse the contributions of Townsend, Mack and Lansley, etc.
- (f) Better answers often first set out the premise that the welfare state has attempted to solve the problem of poverty before then proceeding to an account of views on how or why it may cause poverty. By contrast, less thoughtful or organised answers tended to go directly to the latter position. Most candidates were able to apply ideas from the New Right, the poverty trap and taxation. Although some candidates were heavily dependent on the Item for their ideas, most made use of it. A minority of answers strayed off the question into other aspects of the topic area, but most were well focused, if not always adequately detailed, responses to the set question.

Question 3: Work and Leisure

- (a) Most candidates were able to answer this correctly, eg in terms of deliberate damage to machines, etc.
- (b) Most candidates were able to suggest two appropriate reasons, such as employer discrimination or lack of experience/qualifications.
- (c) Effects suggested included higher rates of crime, ill health, family breakdown, etc, as well as the costs of welfare payments.
- (d) Although some candidates struggled with this, others identified class differences in education, savings/capital or risk of facing long- as against short-term unemployment as suitable reasons for different groups experiencing unemployment differently.
- (e) The weakest answers relied on commonsensical points about assembly-line production or similar, often drifting into other topics. Somewhat better responses picked up on one or two relevant factors, such as the level of skill required or the use of machinery. The best answers dealt with a range of different factors, such as the type of technology used, skill levels, the impact of informal work groups, unionisation, the nature of the product, the scale of production (eg mass or niche), organic and mechanistic organisations, bureaucracy, etc.
- (f) The weakest answers offered commonsense points about conflict or merely recycled the material in the Item. Competent answers often presented an account of the Marxist theory of conflict, but evaluation was often limited to one or two asides in the course of a descriptive account. The best responses considered a range of views and explanations, such as workers' orientations, the nature of the technology, cultural and political traditions, the role of trade unions, communication, etc. Some considered variations across industries and examined a range of different forms of conflict.

Unit 3 SC3W - Sociological Methods

General comments

This paper appeared to be accessible to all but the poorest prepared candidates. As in previous examinations, there appeared to be some variation in the effectiveness of preparation by centres. The most successful candidates were those who had the stronger grasp of theoretical issues and who applied relevant methodological concepts in their answers.

Question 1

- (a) A minority of candidates were able to offer an appropriate explanation of a representative sample but many fell back on simple tautological responses such as ‘a representative sample is a sample representing...’ which was not rewardable. Other, more successful, responses achieved two marks by means of describing how a representative sample might be constructed or might take into account social characteristics such as age, gender, etc.
- (b) Most candidates were able to offer two appropriate reasons, most often referring to bias, validity or a lack of representativeness. A few candidates made very good use of appropriate concepts such as gatekeepers, news values and editorial control. Candidates who lost marks on this part-question tended to do so as a result of repetition of a general theme of bias.
- (c) Many candidates appeared to be well-prepared for this question and could offer three appropriate reasons. Interpretivist notions of *verstehen*, validity and qualitative data were often used effectively, as were practical concerns such as access and cost.
- (d) Many candidates displayed a good understanding of the problems associated with quantitative secondary data, usually in terms of official statistics, but in a minority of cases also with regard to quantitative data created by previous researchers. In responses such as these, most candidates achieved full marks or dropped only two marks through inadequate explanation of one of the problems they had identified.

A few candidates completely missed the focus of the question and talked about qualitative data, perhaps conflating their understanding of this part-question with 1 (c). Other less successful responses were those that failed to focus sufficiently on the ‘secondary’ aspect of the part-question.

- (e) Most candidates were at least adequately prepared for this topic, although a small minority had a very limited understanding of participant observation and attempted to rely on thin accounts of studies such as Barker and Humphreys. Stronger responses exhibited not just a sound knowledge of a range of appropriate reasons but could articulate how these reasons connected into choosing participant observation. This was often done through comparing the different reasons for choosing overt or covert approaches or through connecting some of the characteristics of participant observation to interpretivist concerns about validity, insight, etc. In stronger answers, appropriate studies were applied rather than simply displayed.

Many candidates spent an unnecessary amount of time presenting a summary of the disadvantages of participant observation. Whereas this could at times be seen as appropriate evaluation, the main thrust of this question was clearly towards an examination of the reasons why participant observation was the preferred method of some sociologists. Identifying disadvantages was much more effective as evaluation when they were closely linked to the claimed reasons for using participant observation.

Concepts were often used appropriately but there were still many cases where the concepts were conflated or used interchangeably.

- (f) As with 1 (e), most candidates had at least a sound understanding of different types of interviews. A good proportion of candidates exhibited a sound or better understanding of different forms of interviews, usually comparing structured and unstructured approaches, although a few also made good reference to group interviews. Well-prepared candidates were able to present a balanced coverage of unstructured and structured approaches, identifying their different theoretical locations and/or applying concepts effectively. However, in some cases, candidates confused 'validity' and 'reliability' or took 'representative' to mean 'represents people's opinions'.

In keeping with previous examination sessions, a sizeable minority of candidates did not make any explicit use of the Item, which contained many useful cues. More effective use of the Item went beyond identification of appropriate material, by integrating Item references into answers or adding further arguments or evidence from the candidates' own knowledge.

Unit 3 SC3C - Coursework

General comments

The entry for AS Coursework was again small for this January series. However, some centres have now recognised the benefit of completing for January and then re-submitting for the summer after the receipt of results in March. With only a small entry, the following comments necessarily relate to a limited sample. Within this sample there were some very good centres in which a variety of sociological themes were reviewed – though sadly this did not prove to be the norm. The quality of work was varied, as was candidates' ability to address assessment requirements. Where proposals did score high marks, it was because they had a sharp initial aim or hypothesis that was explicitly taken through each section. Most candidates followed the recommended structure, although there was a tendency for some centres to completely ignore any attempt to keep to a 'recommended word length'. The Context and Concepts section will not be considered 'succinct' when it is over 500 words. The standard of centre marking continues to improve, though there are still a number of centres that are consistently generous with the Context and Concepts and Main Research Method and Reasons sections. All centres should seek assistance from their Coursework Adviser, who is able to clarify issues of coursework content and standardisation. Contact details can be provided by the Subject Department at AQA.

Length of Coursework

This year, the length of proposals was generally closer to the recommended limits. A few centres failed to give a word count for each section of the proposal, or indeed a total count. In most cases proposals were below 1300 words in length, although this was often distorted by 'weighty' contextual sources. The majority of candidates used a word processor and secured their coursework with treasury tags. Articles and bibliographies were still included by some centres; neither is required. Centres should encourage their candidates to focus on terms such as 'succinct' and 'concise' to ensure the word count is adhered to and they meet the criteria for the top bands of the mark scheme.

Ethical Issues

The majority of candidates continued to demonstrate sensitivity to ethical concerns. In some centres, where all candidates had selected a very similar theme to research, there was duplication in the context sources used. Centres should ensure that, where similar sources are selected, they complete their interpretation of them independently.

Administration

There continued to be problems with the correct administration procedures not being followed by all centres. The main difficulties encountered by moderators were as follows:

- Candidate Record Forms (CRFs) not completed correctly – eg with no candidate name, number, or signature by either staff or student and incomplete questions 1-3.
- Different marks for candidates on the Centre Mark Sheet (CMS) compared with Candidate Record Form (CRF).
- Second and third copies of the Centre Mark Sheet not sent to the moderator. The moderator will then return the third copy asking for the sample (initialled on the sheet as S).
- Sample not sent to moderators in centre order.
- Some teachers continued to annotate across each section of the coursework. All comments from the teacher justifying their marking should be in the boxes 'Teacher's supporting statement' on the back of the CRF.

Many centres that attended the standardising meetings last Autumn failed to take advice on administration offered at these sessions.

Assessment Criteria

Hypothesis or Aim

Many centres continued to submit work for all their candidates from a narrow topic area, either Family or Education. The reasons given by some candidates for their choice were inappropriate and did not relate to their hypothesis or aim. In some cases candidates did not appear to know the difference between a hypothesis and an aim. However, the majority of candidates were able to score in the 3-5 mark band by giving some reasons for their choice, a relevant (if limited) sociological background and a general progression of the hypothesis or aim. The better candidates who did move into the 6-8 mark band offered a relevant sociological focus and hypothesis/aim and were able to advance it ‘explicitly’ through each section of the proposal. Those candidates that selected a hypothesis/aim on the basis of ‘personal’ interest appeared to remain more focused throughout the proposal. Centres should encourage candidates to revisit this section on numerous occasions. This will offer the opportunity to fine-tune it in the light of the completion of the other sections, ensuring that at the end the whole proposal remains coherent.

Context and Concepts

This section continued to be completed less satisfactorily, often being over-marked by centres. As noted in reports since 2001, candidates only need to offer **two** appropriate sources and **two** explicit concepts. The sources offered did not always relate directly to the hypothesis/aim, being of a more generalised nature. For example, a candidate who is looking at working-class educational achievement but fails to make any reference within the sources used to the ‘working-class’ aspect. Candidates continued to offer inserts – tabular or graphical – to improve the legitimacy of their sources. Inserts are not required – only a very good knowledge and understanding of them, concisely presented and providing a clear context. With regard to concepts, there was still a problem in overtly identifying which concepts were being focused upon. In addition, the definition of these was at times at best implicit. There was also a tendency for some candidates to produce a mismatch between likely concepts from the initial hypothesis/aim and the actual ones identified. Some concepts were simply ‘tagged’ on and not well developed at the end of the piece. Conversely, some candidates spent so long in the identification, definition and development of the concepts that the actual contextual sources were subsequently covered very superficially. Where both the concepts and sources were integrated together, candidates were able to offer development and depth in a concise manner and provide a clear context for the proposed hypothesis or aim.

Main Research Method and Reasons

Centres have clearly taken the advice to select **one** method only. In so doing, some candidates were able to be more systematic and rigorous in their detail on how the research would be implemented. Quantitative research methods continued to be the most popular, although there were an increasing number who opted for a semi-structured interview or qualitative method such as observation. Centres need to be reminded that all the reasons offered for selecting the method should be ‘succinctly’ presented and related to the candidate’s hypothesis or aim. When candidates discuss these points, they should try to ‘visualise’ each stage of their research and incorporate the practical, ethical and theoretical considerations. Many candidates continued to show a real uncertainty with sampling, piloting and operationalising of key concepts. It is pleasing to note that fewer candidates presented a textbook list of advantages for using the selected method, but did try to relate them more explicitly to their proposed study.

Potential Problems

Candidates continued to find this section very challenging and there was an increase in centres encouraging candidates to use a bullet point approach when listing generalised disadvantages. Many points were taken directly from textbooks and not adapted to candidates’ own research. Higher scoring candidates were able to present problems with specific links to their own research, and were therefore able to develop a critical framework that raised issues of a practical, ethical and theoretical nature. A range of alternatives/solutions were offered by some candidates but centres should note that these cannot be rewarded within this mark scheme.

Unit 4 SCY4

General comments on SCY4

A feature of this paper was the slight change in wording from previous examinations for questions 1 (a), 4 (a) and 7 (a). Whilst this change rewarded the same skills overall and offered the same total marks as before, it gave an opportunity to reward more fully candidates whose strengths lay in identifying a wider range of points. It was still possible, however, to score full marks by identifying and adequately explaining two ways, reasons or factors. Candidates seemed to adapt very well to the change for these questions and no clear difference in performance from previous examinations was noticeable.

Section A: Power and Politics

Question 1

- (a) Most candidates approached this through references to past General Elections and explained about party broadcasts, leaflets and political advertising. A few gave quite detailed accounts of processes involved in changing the image of the Labour Party, whilst others talked more generally about ‘spin’ and ‘spin doctors’. Some candidates failed to score all or some of the marks available because they focused on media processes in general rather than addressing the question and the ways in which political parties use the media, or gave an example but failed to show how this was an illustration of the parties using the media. Many candidates cited Mrs Thatcher’s ‘Iron Lady’ image in this way, but failed to show how a party might actively try to shape the image of the leader.
- (b) Some candidates did not understand the meaning of consensus. The majority, however, were clear on the meaning and wrote about changes to political parties, particularly the Labour Party, as evidence of consensus. The common response was to write of a coming together, a common need to attract voters from the same groups or the adoption of similar policies, giving examples. Others, tackling the question more widely, included references to political apathy, consumerist voting, the growth of pressure and interest groups, globalisation, and other issues as evidence that significant changes were taking place in British politics. Postmodernist views featured in some of these responses. Some candidates challenged these notions, focusing on political ideologies, the growth of the BNP and the situation in Northern Ireland as evidence that political fundamentals had not changed.

Question 2

Some candidates saw this question as an opportunity to write all they knew about pressure groups or theories of voting behaviour. Whilst much of this information could be made relevant, they could not access the higher marks without addressing the central thrust of the question on ways of achieving political goals. Some very well thought out answers provided links between political theories and recent empirical evidence from protests and direct action, such as the fuel blockade, anti-globalisation demonstrations and the Higher Education fees demonstrations, and evaluated the extent to which these had been successful in achieving their goals. In this respect there was a tendency to focus on the spectacular and ignore the more day-to-day actions of organisations such as trades unions. Other candidates were more critical of perceived changes and challenged the notion.

It was evident with this question, as with Question 3, that many candidates had significant knowledge of relevant theories and studies but were thrown by the need to select from these and to apply the material to a specific aspect of the topic area, rather than simply to recount the theories in a lengthy, descriptive and unselective manner.

Question 3

Issues relating to the nature and distribution of power in society are clearly well understood by many candidates. This question gave the opportunity for developing answers using some of these theories at some length and to a degree of complexity. However, what discriminated between the average and the very good response was the ability of the candidates to focus on the question set, with Marxist and feminist theories to the fore, rather than simply using the question to write all they knew about different theories of power. In those answers that did focus on Marxist and feminist theories, the distribution of power was usually dealt with more thoroughly than the nature of power. Most candidates were better informed on Marxism than feminism, with Miliband and Poulantzas featuring in many answers.

The best candidates were able to explore areas of similarity and contrast, sometimes by reference to other theories of power or by using knowledge and understanding of other substantive areas, such as the family or education. Weaker answers tended simply to outline the two theories and leave comparisons implicit.

Section B: Religion

Question 4

- (a) Candidates offered many reasons why women were more likely to have higher participation rates in religion than men. The most popular reasons offered related to women's oppression in society, the growth of feminism in general, an extension of their female domestic role, notions of caring and community and of being more religious in nature than men. Whilst most candidates gave adequate and in some cases very full explanations for each reason identified, others failed to score the marks available because they tended to repeat the point identified rather than to explain it, or write generally on secularisation with little reference to gender issues.
- (b) There were two common responses to this question. One took the question at face value and gave a range of reasons related to young people and religion. Such reasons looked at disenchantment, peer group pressure, alternative activities, rationality and science, reactions to a perceived 'elderly' Church and the search for the new. An alternative but equally valid approach focused more on why older people seemed to be more religious than the young. Many candidates provided a mixture of the two approaches, looking at participation and age more broadly. There were many very high quality answers to this question. Some of lesser quality wrote general secularisation answers with little or no reference to age. It was disappointing to note in many answers a very stereotyped view of the older generations, for example "older people have no friends and have more time so they can go to church".

Question 5

This was the less popular of the two religion essay questions and, in general, answers were of a lower quality than those to Question 6. Many candidates drew no distinction between cults and sects and/or focused mainly on describing different examples or typologies. Many of these answers were superficial and focused mainly on charismatic leadership. Of those candidates who offered fuller and more relevant answers, there was a tendency to concentrate on the short-lived aspect of the question rather than to consider the influence of these organisations in society.

Question 6

This was a very popular question and many candidates provided extremely full and thorough responses to each aspect of the question. Candidates looked at a wide range of relevant factors including the validity of the evidence, disengagement, disenchantment, the privatisation of religion, factors related to a multi-cultural society, the growth of new religious movements, non-Trinitarian religions and definitions of religion. Many candidates showed a high level of skill in utilising their knowledge and understanding of theories, studies and other empirical evidence to analyse fully the question and issues arising from it and to consider all the evidence in an evaluative manner. This topic is clearly covered in a very comprehensive manner in many centres and their candidates have a thorough knowledge and understanding of the issues. Some weaker candidates wrote general secularisation answers which failed to address activity or belief in terms of the second part of the question.

Section C: World Sociology**Question 7**

- (a) The notion and process of globalisation is clearly a well taught and well understood topic in world sociology. Candidates provided many suitable factors in response to this question including those relating to economic, cultural and political aspects of globalisation. The most popular factors cited were personal travel, the Internet, satellite broadcasting, the growth of the EEC and changes to production linked to the growth of TNCs.
- (b) Whilst many candidates may not have been taught specifically about tourism, they appeared to have few problems in linking the stimulus material to notions of rapid economic or developmental growth, possibly tied to investment or controls from outside the country. Some of the arguments considered included the loss of control – political and/or economic – along with possible environmental damage, distortions to cultures and traditional customs, structures and practices. Some outstanding answers linked such examples to evaluations of theories of development in discussing the role of aid and other help from external agencies such as other countries or TNCs.

Question 8

This question allowed candidates some freedom and choice of emphasis in assessing the problems faced by “Third World” countries. However, there was a clear requirement to tie such considerations to environmental concerns. Many candidates failed to access possible marks because they made no such connection and, indeed, ignored the environment altogether. Better candidates were able to put the development process in context and consider priorities, the environment among them, and the need to make realistic choices in often difficult situations. There were some very thoughtful answers in this respect, showing good use of theoretical and empirical material.

Question 9

Theories of development are well understood by many candidates. In response to this question the better candidates were able to use their knowledge and understanding of these theories to address issues of simplicity and conflict. Many did this very well, showing extensive knowledge of modernisation theories along with those from alternative perspectives such as Marxism or the New Right. Some candidates showed impressive skill in applying a range of empirical examples to illustrate and develop many of the points made. Weaker answers tended to rely on a simple juxtaposition of descriptions from Rostow and Frank. Very few candidates, however, chose to explore theories from feminist perspectives.

Unit 5 SC5W – Theory and Methods

Section A

Question 1

- (a) Most candidates were able to explain this concept in terms of something which research seeks to prove or disprove, or an idea that is to be tested.
- (b) The most popular example identified was snowball sampling, which was usually suitably explained. Other forms of sampling frequently mentioned were quota, systematic and cluster sampling. Many answers clearly drew on knowledge from psychology and were accepted if accurate and suitably explained. Despite the instruction in the question, some candidates still gave random sampling as one of their responses and, of course, could score no marks for this.
- (c) The most common response to this question – and a very acceptable one – gave the need to generalise from a sample as the reason why many researchers would want to use representative samples. Many others used variations on this theme and were able to convey the gist of this explanation. The second part of the question caused a few more problems, with many candidates trying to link in issues of reliability and validity but often showing confusions in understanding. The most common acceptable response offered something to do with researching atypical or specific groups rather than mirroring a population.
- (d) The essence of this question was well understood by most candidates. However, many candidates failed to focus on the question set and instead wrote all they knew on science and sociology. This failing often resulted in lengthy and detailed answers where candidates clearly spent too much time for a question worth only ten marks. This kind of question calls for a more focused approach enabling a candidate to score maximum marks with a more abbreviated and succinct answer: this should take them fifteen minutes or so, rather than writing the equivalent of a full essay. In this instance, such an opportunity was easier if candidates focused more on the arguments against sociology being a science. To score full marks some reference to theoretical and practical issues was expected.

Section B

Question 2

This was the more popular of the two essay questions. Many candidates showed an impressive grasp of a range of practical and theoretical issues to do with research in general and participant observation in particular. This was often backed up by extensive knowledge and understanding of relevant studies such as those by Patrick, Barker, Whyte, Polsky, Gilroy and Laud Humphreys. The detail and understanding shown in some answers was quite remarkable.

Other responses were more modest and tended to focus more on practical than theoretical issues, listing advantages and disadvantages or problems. These included getting nearer to the subjects, feeling a greater understanding, seeing things first hand, issues of recording data, the time and cost of doing research, avoiding going native, avoiding danger and illegality and generally trying not to influence the outcome of the research. A few candidates chose this question to recount all they knew about research methods, largely losing sight of the question. Unless they were able to relate some of this material to participant observation, possibly by comparing strengths and weaknesses, they gained only a very few marks.

Question 3

The interpretation for this question of what constituted consensus and conflict theories caused confusion for some candidates. Most, however, settled on functionalism for the former and Marxism and feminism for the latter. Many accounts were very competent in their descriptions and analyses of the perspectives. However, a shortcoming of many responses was candidates' failure to address the part of the question that asked them to consider the usefulness of the perspectives in understanding contemporary society. Many answers were of a timeless and stateless fashion and disappointingly unable to cite examples from contemporary societies to develop or illustrate the points being made. Better answers made use of material from other topic areas such as the family, crime and deviance, or education to develop and illustrate their answers.

Unit 5 SC5C – Coursework

General comments

The January entry for SC5C was very small, although there were one or two larger entry centres that have seen the benefit of candidates possibly re-submitting coursework in the summer, having worked on it after the receipt of results in March.

There appeared to be less evidence of candidates using their AS proposal as a basis for their A2 coursework. It was refreshing to see some research that followed very interesting themes, often linked to cross-cultural studies. Some coursework still lacked depth and any real understanding and insight into the research process. There was also evidence of coursework that exceeded the 3500 words by a considerable amount. Centres should guide their candidates to use only a limited number of focused aims that tie in directly to their hypothesis.

The majority of centres continue to interpret and apply the mark scheme appropriately. However, there are still centres that have not adapted their structure to reflect the changing emphasis on brevity and **one research method**. The 2005 specification will enforce this requirement more explicitly.

Administration was generally carried through well by centres. Candidate Record Forms and Centre Mark Sheets were completed satisfactorily. Centres should remember to forward copies 2 and 3 of the Centre Mark Sheet to the moderator.

There were very few instances of malpractice, although weaker candidates continue to regurgitate contextual sources directly from textbooks.

Context

On the whole, the context section was the strongest section submitted by candidates, perhaps reflecting the fact that centres devote a greater amount of time to this at the expense of the later sections. Excellent context sections incorporated a wide range of succinct, contemporary sources, a clear theoretical framework, with a well-defined conceptual grasp explicitly linked to the focus of their research. The word count did not exceed 1000 words.

Unfortunately, there were also examples of candidates who had not elaborated beyond their AS proposal. Two sources and two concepts will not offer the depth required to meet a ‘*good knowledge and clear understanding*’ of the broader sociological context, as some centres’ marking indicated.

Centres should also remember that candidates would achieve higher marks by making explicit links to their context when conducting their analysis of evidence.

Methodology

This section was not as impressive as the context section. Candidates must select one method and offer a good knowledge of its strengths and weaknesses. There was an over-reliance by many candidates on providing a textbook-driven analysis of their selected method. The reasons for choice of the method were often brief and superficial, failing to apply the method explicitly to the study. Discussion of potential problems associated with the method was often list-like, together with a checklist of possible methods and why these were rejected. However, on a positive note, some centres have recognised the need to produce a piece of coursework that is tightly tied to the study itself. It was refreshing to see candidates offering a theoretical location for their method, discussion of access to the sample, issues of sensitivity towards the sample, a clear understanding of the sampling technique and how it was appropriate, clear evaluation of piloting and examples of and justification for questionnaires, interview questions, observation schedules and content analysis

categories. These were particularly impressive where the questions and categories used allowed the concepts to be operationalised.

Candidates should be encouraged to place working examples of research documents in the appendix, but they must be referred to and discussed in the text. The appendices will not be included in the final word count.

In summary, higher scoring candidates continued to demonstrate a very good knowledge and understanding of their chosen method, drawing out, in a coherent fashion, key theoretical, practical and ethical considerations.

Evidence (Application, Presentation, Interpretation & Analysis)

On the whole, this remained a disappointing section where too many centres have still not recognised the depth required to move into the higher mark bands. In particular, the following issues stood out. Far too many pieces of coursework attempted to get away with a superficial examination of results through a presentation of graphical or tabular evidence. Stronger candidates were more systematic, selective and used them to enhance their understanding beyond description. Their analysis also related to theory, context and concepts.

There was an increase in qualitative studies and many of these yielded impressive and insightful analysis. They were at their strongest when candidates placed transcripts of interviews and observation schedules in the appendix and then selected key quotes/points from them that focused specifically on the rationale. This was often done with rigour and sensitivity.

A recommendation to centres from this January series is to ensure that candidates leave sufficient time to enable this section to be completed with the depth required. A clear research timeline would help candidates balance their time across the sections more appropriately.

Rationale, Evaluation and Conclusions

Once again, the quality and length of rationales varied. Whilst many candidates were able to offer either a general aim or hypothesis and a limited number of achievable objectives linked directly to it, others failed to develop issues beyond their AS proposal of aim/hypothesis and thus were left with a very short section. However, it was particularly refreshing to see some pieces of work that produced a rationale with a clear and explicit outline of reasons for choosing the subject within a relevant sociological context. In some cases, the initial hypothesis was still a little broad, although more centres have acknowledged the need for precision here. However, in such instances the rationale was often a saving grace, having been overtly pursued throughout the coursework. The higher scoring rationales were succinct, relevant and explicitly linked throughout the study.

The quality of the evaluation continued to vary considerably. With higher scoring pieces of research, candidates used this section to tie everything together in a structured and clear way. The evaluation of methodology was detailed and insightful, together with practical and achievable recommendations for further research informed by the strengths and limitations of their own study. Thoughtful sociological conclusions were drawn to the hypothesis/general aim and objectives as stated in their rationale. Candidates who also drew on material from other sections to justify their conclusions were well rewarded.

With regret, there are still very few candidates drawing on evidence from their research diary to support their analysis of the method used. Lower scoring work still continued to be self-congratulatory, as indicated in previous reports. This work offered a thin and unconvincing evaluation of their research and in many cases appeared rushed and not given the prominence it deserved.

Unit 6 SCY6

General comments

Some candidates wrote too much for part (a), despite the injunction in the question to answer briefly. By contrast, some candidates wrote very long answers to (c), though frequently much of the material presented was only tangentially related to the set question. Not surprisingly, these ‘catch-all’ answers were less successful at demonstrating the skill of interpreting material in appropriate ways. These and most other candidates were generally more successful at showing AO1 than AO2 skills. Candidates appear to have completed their answers within the time allowed. Some candidates wisely wrote brief plans, especially for the essay, but many appear to have simply launched into their answers without further ado. Many of these were badly structured.

Question 1: Crime and Deviance

- (a) Successful candidates generally identified under-reporting and under-recording as two appropriate problems. The latter point was often tied into an explanation concerning police discretion, while under-reporting was more likely to be linked to the crime being too trivial, or fear of the perpetrator, or ignorance of the crime having taken place. Weaker answers were generally able to identify one or two problems but were not able to explain them satisfactorily.
- (b) Families and households, education, religion and mass media provided the most popular choices. In terms of families, there were many general discussions of (inadequate) socialisation. Better answers located this in a theoretical context (usually New Right) and linked it effectively. Education links were often lengthy accounts of labelling, with better candidates showing explicit links to deviance, though many candidates misinterpreted Willis’ work as a labelling approach. Moral panics and stereotyping were the main ways in which the media were linked. Some answers went in for long descriptions of studies without successfully linking the material to deviance. Some good responses examined the different or contrasting ways in which an area might be linked to deviance (eg educational failure due to cultural deprivation (A K Cohen) versus educational failure due to labelling (Becker) leading to formation of a deviant subculture). Some weak answers made links to relevant areas but contained few or no concepts or elaboration.
- (c) Many of the weakest answers simply recycled material from the Item with minimal elaboration. Others simply wrote everything or anything they knew about crime and deviance, with little regard to the question set. By contrast, many of the best answers took the Item as a jumping-off point from which to illustrate, from a variety of studies, the different Marxist views (eg classical Marxism, neo-Marxism, etc.). These were then evaluated appropriately from different perspectives (generally functionalist, interactionist and/or feminist). Good answers dealt with issues such as law creation, selective law enforcement, subcultural resistance to capitalism, intra- and inter-class crime, etc. These were often able to locate Marxist approaches to crime within a broader account of Marxism as a theoretical perspective. Many candidates wrote conclusions, although these often failed to relate more than minimally to what had been said earlier in the answer.

Question 2: Stratification and Differentiation

- (a) The problem most often identified by candidates was that of determining the criteria for defining ethnic groups, though some candidates ended up writing two versions of this same point. The other popular response was the issue of the difference between the sociologist’s view and the subject’s view of the latter’s ethnicity.

- (b) Most candidates examined at least two areas, though many candidates struggled to rise above fairly commonsense accounts of differences between ethnic groups. Better answers made reference to life chances, particularly employment and unemployment, but also differences in family life such as the incidence of lone parent families or possible differences in gender role socialisation, but surprisingly few made reference to areas such as the mass media, education or poverty. Very few candidates sought to locate their discussion within any theoretical context. Very few made reference to religion or poverty or even education, let alone world sociology, or media or power and politics. Overall, answers tended to be descriptive and explicit evaluation or analysis of any of the material or issues was limited. For example, few candidates considered the issue of the relative importance of ethnicity as against, or combined with, class, gender, age, etc.
- (c) Weaker answers tended to give a basic account of aspects of functionalist views with little or no evaluative comment. Some other candidates were better versed in Marxist theory but could not turn this to challenge functionalist ideas. More focused answers gave a satisfactory account of functionalist views, usually with support from Parsons and Davis and Moore (sometimes Saunders). More successful answers were able to evaluate this, usually with reference to Marxist views. The best answers addressed both aspects of the question: inevitability was discussed in relation to Marxist views, while whether stratification was beneficial was considered with reference to inequality and justice. Tumin was often used as a counter-argument to Davis and Moore. Very few answers made any link between functionalism as a general theory or perspective and functionalist views on stratification (eg through ideas of system needs and value consensus).

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	33.7	8.6
Unit 2 (SCY2)	60	60	32.5	8.4
Unit 3 (SC3W)	60	60	34.9	7.4
Unit 3 (SC3C)	60	60	36.2	7.2
Unit 4 (SCY4)	60	60	36.2	9.0
Unit 5 (SC5W)	60	60	33.1	7.7
Unit 5 (SC5C)	60	60	40.6	7.9
Unit 6 (SCY6)	60	60	31.4	8.2

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

Unit SCY1/Families and Households; Health; Mass Media (14109 candidates)

Grade	Max. mark	A	B	C	D	E
Scaled Boundary Mark	60	42	38	34	30	26
Uniform Boundary Mark	105	84	74	63	53	42

Unit SCY2/Education; Wealth, Poverty and Welfare; Work and Leisure (8617 candidates)

Grade	Max. mark	A	B	C	D	E
Scaled Boundary Mark	60	40	36	33	30	27
Uniform Boundary Mark	105	84	74	63	53	42

Unit SC3W/Sociological Methods (4623 candidates)

Grade	Max. mark	A	B	C	D	E
Scaled Boundary Mark	60	41	37	33	30	27
Uniform Boundary Mark	90	72	63	54	45	36

Unit SC3C/Coursework (1142 candidates)

Grade	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 (9188 candidates)

Grade	Max. mark	A	B	C	D	E
Scaled Boundary Mark	60	43	39	35	31	27
Uniform Boundary Mark	90	72	63	54	45	36

Unit SC5W/Theory and Methods (2383 candidates)

Grade	Max. mark	A	B	C	D	E
Scaled Boundary Mark	60	41	37	33	29	25
Uniform Boundary Mark	90	72	63	54	45	36

Unit SC5C/Coursework (1134 candidates)

Grade	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 (435 candidates)

Grade	Max. mark	A	B	C	D	E
Scaled Boundary Mark	60	45	40	36	32	28
Uniform Boundary Mark	120	96	84	72	60	48

Advanced Subsidiary award

Provisional statistics for the award (1265 candidates)

	A	B	C	D	E
Cumulative %	14.8	34.6	59.6	79.5	93.0

Advanced award

Provisional statistics for the award (165 candidates)

	A	B	C	D	E
Cumulative %	9.7	37.0	69.7	86.7	95.8

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.