

# GCE 2005

## *January Series*



## Report on the Examination

### **Sociology**

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- Advanced Subsidiary
- Advanced

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*Dr Michael Cresswell Director General*

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# *Sociology*

## ***General***

The entry for the January examination continues to rise for both AS and A2 units. Teachers can take satisfaction from the fact that examiners saw evidence of some very well prepared candidates who showed a thorough command of sociological ideas and evidence and an ability to analyse and evaluate their material appropriately in the light of the demands of the set questions. The great majority of candidates appear to have completed their answers in the time available.

However, as in previous years, a large number of candidates appeared to have answered the questions without any evidence of having first planned their answers, producing sometimes long, badly focused responses that gained mediocre reward. Centres should, of course, encourage candidates to spend time reflecting on the questions and associated Items and planning their answers.

Many candidates wrote very long answers for questions that are worth relatively few marks and that call for short but well structured responses. On AS units in particular, this tendency sometimes led to rather short answers to the higher-mark questions. Candidates should heed carefully any instruction to explain or describe briefly.

Most scripts were sufficiently legible, but there was a significant minority of scripts where the handwriting was more or less unreadable. Centres and teachers should be aware that it is clearly in the best interests of these candidates to consult AQA in advance of the examination for advice on the options available to ensure that they are able to present their work to their maximum benefit.

There were also instances of candidates using correcting fluid, highlighter pens, red and green ink etc. Centres should note that these are serious infringements of examination regulations and should be prevented.

In terms of the quality of written communication, a significant minority of candidates had serious difficulty in expressing their sociological ideas effectively.

Finally, examiners would greatly appreciate the co-operation of centres in ensuring that candidates complete all relevant details on the front of their answer books. This would help to reduce the risk of administrative errors occurring that could disadvantage candidates.

## **Unit SCY1**

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

Question 1 proved to be by far the most popular question in this unit. A relatively small number of candidates answered Question 3, while very few answered Question 2.

- (a) Most candidates were able to offer an explanation of the term ‘reconstituted family’, but some candidates failed to make any reference to children in their answers, eg definitions along the lines of ‘two people who have been divorced from previous partners who then set up home together’. These answers failed to score.
- (b) A minority of candidates mistook the question for one asking for reasons why marriages had failed and so gave reasons for increases in divorce. However, most candidates interpreted the

question correctly and suggested reasons such as the acceptability of cohabitation or of bearing children outside marriage.

- (c) Most candidates were able to suggest three reasons why women are now having fewer children than in the past. These included women now having the option of a career instead of motherhood, the availability of contraception, and the later age of marriage.
- (d) Most candidates were able to identify at least one reason, such as that the family was simply becoming more diverse. Other reasons included the idea that family forms such as lone parent were often simply a temporary phase prior to forming a two-parent family, or that most births outside marriage are to cohabiting couples. However, some candidates had difficulty in organising their answers so as to identify two distinct reasons or to explain them clearly.
- (e) Most candidates had some knowledge of functions of the family. In the case of weaker answers, this was confined to elements of Parsons and/or Murdock, though a common feature of these answers was a lack of clarity about the details (especially of Parsons' stabilisation of adult personalities function). A few also drifted into material on gender roles that might have been better used for part (f). Better answers were able to supply more conceptual details and/or a wider range of functions, rather than to offer a simple descriptive list. Good answers went beyond functionalism to consider the question from the standpoint of other perspectives, such as Marxism and feminism, and this often enabled them to generate some evaluative discussion. These answers were often able to address explicitly both the 'individual' and 'society' aspects of the question.
- (f) Most candidates had some knowledge of sociological material on couples' relationships. In weaker answers, this was generally confined to a little about Young and Willmott (or material ineffectually recycled from the Item), but better responses included a wider range of material on decision-making, domestic violence or divorce. A common shortcoming was not to address the issue of the impact of paid work that the question required, although some who did so often adopted a somewhat speculative tone. Some good answers considered cohabiting and/or same-sex versus married couples, issues such as gender scripts, the crisis of masculinity, the dual burden/triple shift, households where the female was the main breadwinner, etc. Evaluation was often lacking, but some candidates structured their answers around a debate between 'march of progress', feminist and New Right or functionalist views.

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

- (a) Many candidates apparently had no knowledge of the artefact explanation, despite its featuring as one of the four explanations of the relationship between class and health chances discussed in the Black Report.
- (b) Again, many candidates seemed unaware of the social selection explanation and failed to produce any valid criticisms of it. Those who did offer an appropriate criticism usually focused on the idea that the explanation assumes that there are no obstacles to mobility other than illness.
- (c) Most candidates had no difficulty in identifying three appropriate factors, such as diet, exercise, smoking, etc. However, occasionally, material factors such as housing or employment were given.
- (d) Candidates were generally able to identify one or two appropriate criticisms of the cultural/behavioural explanation of the link between class and health. These included the ideas that it neglects the underlying material causes of behaviour or the greater importance of material factors, or that it adopts a victim-blaming stance.

- (e) Some candidates were unaware of the difference between health chances and health care and tended to offer rather indiscriminate accounts of class or other differences in both. Better responses were able to show a reasonable knowledge of a range of reasons for differences in access, such as speech codes or cultural capital in dealing with GPs, knowledge of the workings of the NHS, ability to pay for private treatment, etc. However, many answers were confined to accounts of class differences, with little or no reference to other social groups. Better answers, by contrast, drew upon material on gender, ethnic, age or regional differences in access to care. Some very good responses gave explicit consideration to different types of care (preventative, curative, mental health, etc) and examined a range of other reasons in addition to those already referred to, such as institutional racism, patriarchy, funding differences, and differences in the health beliefs or care practices of different groups.
- (f) The weakest responses were often little more than commonsensical points about the side effects of medicines or the success of 'wonder drugs', while some others rapidly lost focus and drifted into an 'inequalities in health' answer with few links to the question set. Better answers often featured either Illich or the social model of health, both of which provided candidates with a starting point from which to evaluate the effectiveness of modern medicine and the medical profession, while some took a historical approach, for example, using McKeown or Jewson. Others drew on the work of Parsons, Marxist or feminist writers to discuss the social role of the medical profession in maintaining the social system, capitalism or patriarchy.

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

- (a) Most candidates offered a reasonable explanation, usually in terms of the idea of groups that pose a threat (real or imaginary) cause fear, symbolise disorder or evil, etc. However, those candidates who merely stated that folk devils are groups whom the media 'portrays negatively' did not do enough to gain the marks.
- (b) Almost all candidates succeeded in suggesting one or two reasons, such as because of the prejudices of those who control the output of the media, because the groups in question challenged the consensus, or because they posed a threat to capitalism.
- (c) Many candidates had difficulty suggesting problems that sociologists might face in studying media effects. Some weaker answers asserted that audiences were diverse but did not make it clear why or how this would pose a problem in studying the media's effects on them. Correct answers often focused on problems of experiments, separating long from short-term effects, or media effects from other effects, eg peer groups, family, etc.
- (d) Candidates generally were successful in identifying suitable reasons. These included consumer sovereignty (they could switch off or refuse to buy if they did not like the message), selective perception, the influence of social groups or opinion leaders in mediating messages, etc. Some candidates merely stated various models of the media without linking these very effectively to the question, and a few felt it necessary to set out in detail the contrary view before turning their attention to the question set.
- (e) Many answers to this lacked detailed knowledge of the relevant processes of news production. Weaker answers frequently made some mention of gatekeepers or similar but were unable to offer much detail. Better answers considered a range of different processes, and examined organisational, practical and ideological factors influencing news production. Many offered a rather abstract account of models of the mass media, but were unable to apply this specifically to news output and instead often drifted into a rather general answer about media bias. The best answers tended to combine a detailed grasp of production processes with one or more theoretical frameworks, eg interactionist, Marxist, within which to interpret the significance of these processes.

- (f) Weaker answers often relied heavily on recycling (or just copying) material from the Item and were unable to add anything further. More satisfactory responses were able to offer a reasonably full account of the pluralist model, focusing on issues such as consumer sovereignty, choice and diversity, the active audience, the need to make a profit, etc. Generally, candidates were able to develop some evaluation, usually from a Marxist standpoint. Some very good answers traced the links between the pluralist market model and models of audience effects or explanations of representations, eg the notion of choice/active audience in the uses and gratifications model. Some considered issues such as the implications of new media technologies, globalisation, etc for the validity of the pluralist model.

## Unit SCY2

### *Question 1: Education*

Question 1 proved to be by far the most popular question in this unit. A relatively small number of candidates answered Question 2, while very few indeed answered Question 3.

- (a) Most candidates answered this correctly, usually in terms of a lack of resources needed for education, such as a quiet place to study, a computer etc, or in terms of poverty. A few misread the question as one about *maternal* rather than material deprivation.
- (b) Most candidates were able to suggest one or two reasons, such as lack of education, feelings of inferiority, inability to take time off work or to afford babysitters, etc.
- (c) Many candidates answered this poorly because they had no real understanding either of cultural deprivation or of relevant policies to ameliorate it. These candidates generally proposed any policy that appeared to promote equal opportunities, when what was required was policies that were intended to target a deficit in specific groups of children. Policies that scored included Education Action Zones, Education Priority Areas, Sure Start, Operation Headstart, parenting classes, additional learning support and nursery education.
- (d) The quality of responses to this was mixed. Good answers identified and explained the role of factors such as changes in the labour market, in assessment, eg the introduction of coursework, in girls' priorities, etc. Answers that did not score well tended to be those that did not show any *change* in gender differences.
- (e) Candidates generally coped well with this question. The best answers dealt with a range of processes in schools, including labelling, streaming, the self-fulfilling prophecy, pupil subcultures, the hidden curriculum, the ethnocentric curriculum, assessment, etc. Some answers concentrated solely on class, but better answers also covered ethnic and/or gender differences in achievement in relation to these processes. Some candidates took this for a question on the functions of the education system and presented material more appropriate to part (f). Weaker answers had little awareness of processes other than labelling and/or the self-fulfilling prophecy, often presented in fragmentary fashion.
- (f) Most candidates were able to show some knowledge of material on the functions of education. This varied from sketchy accounts based on the Item to very detailed coverage of a range of functions from a variety of different perspectives, while the majority were able to present at least a reasonable summary of functionalist and Marxist views. However, not all were able to focus successfully on the link to work, or on both selection *and* preparation. A minority produced commonsensical views of the relation between school and work, with little sociological content.

By contrast, some were able to integrate discussion of a number of relevant educational or training policies into their answers, and some also included other perspectives such as the New Right and feminism.

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

- (a) Most candidates were able to explain relative poverty, usually in terms of not being able to have the same things as the majority. However, a few candidates had little or no idea of the meaning of this key concept.
- (b) Although some candidates struggled to find a second reason, most came up with two, such as low pay, lack of savings, etc.
- (c) Candidates were generally able to suggest one or two ways in which poverty might be functional, though many answers were repetitive and overly long. Among more popular responses were that it provides jobs for the middle classes, supplies low-paid workers to do jobs others refuse, or serves as a negative incentive to others.
- (d) Some candidates seemed unfamiliar with the Marxist explanation of poverty and were thus unable to produce any significant criticisms of it. Among those with an understanding of the Marxist view, common criticisms were of its determinism, its neglect of cultural factors, or that not all workers were inevitably poor. Some were unable satisfactorily to explain the criticisms that they had identified.
- (e) In this part of the question, candidates generally dealt with poverty much better than with wealth, and some weaker answers made no references to wealth at all. Most candidates had some knowledge and understanding of different definitions, though many were confined to absolute and relative definitions, while better answers also included subjective and/or primary and secondary poverty. The extent to which candidates also tackled issues of measurement was also a discriminator, with some good answers examining issues such as consensual measures of poverty, poverty lines, problems of measuring wealth, etc. A few examined the relationship between definitions and measures of poverty.
- (f) Weaker answers with little knowledge or understanding of the question or the issues raised by it tended to rely heavily on the Item but, unsurprisingly, were able to add very little to it. Some of these opted instead to present unfocused accounts of various theories of poverty. However, most candidates showed some knowledge of the idea of targeting of benefits. Some answers were essentially descriptive though offered relevant accounts of different types of benefit, but better answers located this within, usually, a New Right view. The best answers raised a range of issues, including the advantages and disadvantages of means-testing, selective versus universal models of welfare, individualism versus collectivism, welfare pluralism, etc. Some developed evaluation by means of a debate between New Right and social democratic or other perspectives on welfare.

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

- (a) Most candidates showed some understanding of the Human Relations approach, such as that social factors or informal organisation were important factors affecting workers' attitudes or productivity. However, some candidates clearly had no knowledge of Human Relations.
- (b) Some of those who scored on part (a) were nonetheless unable to produce any criticisms of the approach. However, others scored marks for the idea that it neglects economic motivations, it is just a management ideology or another means of manipulating or exploiting workers etc.

- (c) Rather surprisingly, some candidates knew little about alienation, but most were able to suggest at least one or two reasons, such as differences in pay or skills, level of isolation or repetition involved in the work, etc. A few candidates produced very long, and sometimes very repetitive, answers.
- (d) Candidates were generally quite successful here, with features of Fordist production systems such as mass production, assembly-line production, and an extensive division of labour, being commonly identified. Candidates were usually able to describe these features successfully.
- (e) Some weaker responses were little more than commonsense with few, if any, sociological concepts in evidence. However, most candidates had some relevant knowledge of the causes of or reasons for conflict at work. These included pay, supervision and management styles, unionisation, the nature of the technology, wider economic conditions such as unemployment or inflation levels, the political culture, etc. However, some candidates presented broadly relevant knowledge about alienation, technology, etc without interpreting this fully and appropriately to the demands of the question. Some interpreted ‘conflict’ to mean strikes, but others examined a range of different forms of conflict.
- (f) Most candidates showed some knowledge of sociological material on work and leisure, though there was less success in applying it fully to the specific requirements of the question. Many answers were based on Parker and identified some ways in which work affects leisure patterns. Better answers offered a wider range of material and began to consider identity as well as leisure. Few answers developed this aspect far, however, though some raised issues such as the growing importance of consumption as against production for shaping leisure and/or identity, class consciousness, the commercialisation of leisure, ethnic, age and gender differences, etc. Some developed evaluation through an assessment of post-modernist and other views of leisure and identity.

## Unit SC3W – Sociological Methods

### *General*

Most candidates appeared to manage their time appropriately, although a minority appeared to run out of time to complete their final answer. Very few candidates missed out entire part-questions. There appeared to be more examples of limited length answers to part-questions (e) and (f) than in similar past examinations. By contrast, there continued to be a degree of over-writing in response to some of the non-essay part-questions.

### *Question 1*

- (a) Many candidates were unable to provide an accurate response to this question. Commonly, these candidates offered a definition of ‘research population’ or suggested that a sampling frame was a list of members of a research sample. Some candidates offered more accurate answers, often including an appropriate example to confirm their understanding.
- (b) The vast majority of candidates dealt very effectively with this part-question. Most candidates were able to suggest two appropriate factors; most typically, class and ethnicity. Other appropriate responses referred to marital history, location, sexual preference, level of education, etc. Where marks were lost, this was usually the result of offering two overlapping factors such as class and income. This illustrates the need for candidates to offer more than the required number in cases where they are unsure whether or not their responses are interchangeable.

- (c) Generally, this part-question was answered very well, with most candidates scoring four or six marks. Very few candidates failed to pick up from the question that reference to issues of time and cost would not be rewarded. Most responses made appropriate reference to issues such as interviewer bias, lack of reliability, problems of categorisation, etc.

A few candidates confused intensive interviews with structured interviews. Although they may not have come across the use of the term 'intensive' in this context, Item A explicitly identified intensive with unstructured interviews. This illustrates the need for candidates to read these opening part-questions in the context of the Item reference.

- (d) Many candidates treated this question as a variant on two advantages of participant observation. Whilst this often led to maximum or near-maximum marks, in some cases the focus slipped from that in the question, of 'actively joining in...'. Many candidates followed, or attempted to follow, the 'identify' and 'explain' format although there was still some evidence of a sizeable minority of candidates over-writing in response to this part-question.
- (e) There were a range of types of response to this part-question. Most candidates avoided the route taken by many in similar past questions of examining both the problems and the strengths of secondary data when the question asks for an examination of only one aspect. Strong answers not only examined both quantitative and qualitative secondary data but identified problems relating to specific types of data within each such as letters, historical documents, 'hard' and 'soft' official statistics, etc. Getting into the 'sub-sets' of the types of secondary data that can be used showed good interpretation and analysis skills.

Less effective responses often offered very general accounts of secondary data, listed the criteria for judging data but without tying these specifically into secondary data, or presented a prepared 'advantages and disadvantages' answer. A few candidates appeared to have little knowledge or understanding of what is meant by secondary data and offered very limited responses relating to data in general.

- (f) Again, this part-question elicited a range of responses. Very effective answers explored both practical and ethical factors in detail, applied these to examples taken from a range of research methods/types of data/studies and also made effective reference to theoretical factors relating to choice of methods. However, other responses were less effective because either they ignored theoretical factors or were over-reliant on the Item and made reference to participant observation alone. Both kinds of response tended to limit the opportunities for candidates to exhibit the higher order skills of analysis and evaluation. There were a few examples of very weak responses where candidates appeared not to have considered this issue in their examination preparation.

## **Unit SC3C - Coursework**

### ***General***

The entry for AS coursework in January continues to be small. With only a small entry, the following comments necessarily relate to a limited sample. Many of these entries were re-submissions from June 2004. Generally, these were not of a high standard, although there were a few pieces of original and interesting work. These were proposals that either linked to the candidates' own personal interest, or ventured away from the family and education and covered health and media related topics. A small number of experienced centres have seen the potential benefit of entering their candidates for the first time in January, which relieves the pressure for the summer series and, if required, allows for re-submissions by candidates after receipt of the March results. There continues to be evidence of

considerable over-marking in some centres, with ranking of candidates also astray. Centres whose marking has been adjusted should take the opportunity to attend AQA support meetings, obtain the exemplar material provided by AQA and ask for support from their coursework adviser.

### ***Length of Coursework***

It is pleasing to report that the majority of proposals were close to the recommended length of 1200 words. Very few candidates failed to offer correct section headings or a section and total word length. However, there continued to be evidence of excessive word length within the context and concepts section.

The majority of coursework is well presented in word-processed format. A minority of proposals was unsecured. Please secure the proposals with treasury tags, and do not place in plastic wallets.

### ***Ethical Issues***

The majority of candidates continued to demonstrate sensitivity to ethical concerns. Where centres have encouraged all their candidates to follow a similar topic area on the family or education, please ensure it has been written up independently; if not, the candidate is in danger of malpractice.

### ***Administration***

Unfortunately, on the whole, administration remains poor. A number of centres failed to complete all the administration correctly. It is essential that centres regularly check the AQA website for copies of the relevant documentation and liaise with their Examinations Officer. The following key administrative points are to be noted for the next series in summer 2005:

- Candidate Record Forms (CRFs) are to be attached to each candidate's work with the correct candidate name, number and signature of authentication by student and staff. Also ensure that the CRFs used are for the 2005 series of exams.
- With every sample please submit a Centre Declaration Sheet (CDS), which has the signature of each member of staff involved in the centre moderation and the head of centre.
- The mark given on the Candidate Record Form (CRF) should match the mark given on the Centre Mark Sheet (CMS). This was not always the case.
- Second and third copies (pink and yellow sheets) of the Centre Mark sheet (CMS) should always be sent with the sample, irrespective of the sample size. The Moderator will return the third (yellow) copy when returning the sample to the centre. It will indicate which candidate's work has been sampled by the moderator.
- Teacher comments on the proposal should remain on the reverse of the CRF, not annotated in the proposal itself.

If the centre does not complete the correct documentation, the AQA moderator will ask for this by telephone and letter. This is a requirement of the QCA Code of Practice.

### ***Assessment Criteria***

#### ***Hypothesis or Aim***

This was generally an adequate section, although candidates still demonstrated problems in distinguishing between a hypothesis and an aim. Some candidates were able to offer a very broad rather than specific hypothesis or aim. An example is 'girls achieve better at GCSE than boys'. This proposal should be asking the question "why?" Other areas of weakness included an inability to offer explicit reasons for the proposal and to present it with a relevant sociological focus. Reasons may include one of a personal nature and one of a more sociological nature, linked perhaps to previous research.

Too many centres continued to reward this section with full marks, when in fact the evidence was more suited to the 3-5 band. Candidates must ensure a clear progression of the hypothesis or aim through each of the other sections. If candidates demonstrated a flawed understanding of a hypothesis or aim from the beginning, this generally remained throughout the whole proposal and prevented many sections from accessing the top bands. The candidates who went for clarity and simplicity with their hypothesis or aim were able to revisit it through each section and show progression was clearly possible. They were rewarded with a mark in the 6-8 band.

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

This section is still over-marked by a number of centres. As stated in previous reports, simple is best. Candidates need to offer two appropriate sources with two identified and defined concepts, and elaborate upon them, preferably through the contextual sources selected. Contextual sources were on the whole appropriate, though some candidates produced pieces which were too thin, unattributed (particularly those taken from newspaper or internet sources), or sources (often more than two) which were tangential and/or only barely related to their aim or hypothesis. Unfortunately, a returning feature was that of centres submitting the source or table in an appendix or attached to the section.

There is also a need, in some cases, for more contemporary sources to be selected, or at least a realisation that certain sources are outdated. This was most common with proposals on the family.

Weaker candidates still misunderstand what a concept is. Theories and changes in the divorce law were incorrect examples of concepts witnessed this January by moderators. As stated in previous reports, centres must offer clearer guidance on what an appropriate concept is, how it can be defined and how it can be applied in an explicit and relevant way to the proposal.

Candidates who achieved marks in the top band were able to integrate both the concepts and sources, offering appropriate development and depth in a concise manner, and provided a clear context for the proposed hypothesis or aim.

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

Centres, on the whole, continued to follow previous advice from reports and selected one method only. However, another regrettable, returning feature was the use of triangulation by weaker candidates; happily, these were in the minority. These weaker candidates had also forgotten what their hypothesis or aim was. They had a tendency to reproduce notes or textbook material on methods, reflecting a lack of understanding. They focused on one particular aspect of the method such as sampling, piloting or questionnaire design, ignoring everything else. Reference to any contextual sources, theory or concepts was rarely seen.

Again, it was pleasing to see high scoring candidates demonstrate sensitivity and offer a methodology with a clear practical, theoretical and ethical purchase. Conversely, there were examples of over-ambitious and impractical methods selected.

In line with previous reports, candidates appeared to have misconceptions about sampling techniques, reliability, validity and the value of piloting. More attention is required to issues of implementation of the method, not in an abstract, generalised manner, but in a way that shows it has a clear relationship to the proposal.

### ***Potential Problems***

Many weaker candidates showed a tendency to return to a textbook, list-like range of problems with little or no link to the hypothesis or aim. It was at this point that these same candidates remembered they should also include problems on piloting, ethics and researcher bias. They also focused on how the problems should be solved, which is not a requirement of this specification.

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. It was particularly impressive to see problems that related back to material discussed in the context and concepts section.

## Unit SCY4

### *General*

Religion remains the topic area taught at the majority of centres. However, it was pleasing to note an increase in the number of centres studying World Sociology.

Many centres have obviously spent quite a lot of time preparing candidates via past papers and model answers. This is evident in the ‘house style’ that was a feature in answers from many centres. In this particular model it is very clear that students have developed checklists of things to mention or reference. Many students used such preparation well and scored highly. However, some had less facility to adapt their prepared material to the specific questions set and thus missed many opportunities to score marks.

### *Section A – Power and Politics*

#### *Question 1*

- (a) The topic of the distribution of power in society is well understood by most candidates. However, some had difficulty in identifying relevant material to answer this question, preferring instead to describe timeless and classic theories of power. Better answers showed how, by using measures such as planning controls, taxation, regulation, publicity, financial and/or market controls, governments could exercise various degrees of control over multinational corporations.

It was not required for this question, but many candidates further developed their answers to give a critique of globalisation and the role of the state. While such elaboration showed good knowledge and understanding, the marks for the question had usually been gained already from the answers indicated above.

- (b) As indicated above, this is clearly an aspect of political sociology well understood by many candidates. Most candidates took their lead from the Item and considered the roles of the state and multinational corporations. It was disappointing to see the number of candidates who went no further than this. However, some candidates considered other aspects related to power in society, such as the rise of new political movements, international terrorism, international pressure group activity, the growth of the European Community, the Internet and the growth of technology. A few also incorporated the work of various postmodern and other theoreticians on this topic.

As with part (a) of this question, some candidates offered merely a reprise of the classic theories of power.

#### *Question 2*

This was a popular question and well answered by many candidates. It was encouraging to read answers that moved well beyond consideration of theories of voting behaviour, and that considered the parts played by alternative forms of political action in affecting the public perception of general elections. In such answers, the assumption taken from the question was generally that voting did not

bring about effective social change and that alternative forms of action might be more effective. There was a good mix of up-to-date empirical material and theory in many of these answers.

Some candidates took a more traditional and narrower voting behaviour-based approach, considering issues such as gender, age, and partisan and class dealignment. As with many answers, the key to obtaining the higher marks for this question lay with using such material effectively to answer the question set, rather than providing a generalised response on the topic area as a whole.

### ***Question 3***

This question was the less popular and, in most cases, the less well answered of the two politics essays. Some candidates took this to be a straightforward question on pressure groups and produced accounts and examples of protective and promotional groups operating today. Better variations of this approach also included new political movements.

Disappointingly few candidates seemed to have a thorough grasp or understanding of the role of political parties in the political process, showing scant knowledge or understanding of aspects such as party organisation, membership, policy formation or the use of the media in party promotion. Few seemed aware of the existence or development of political parties linked to nationalist or environmental issues, describing instead a political landscape from somewhere in the 1950s or 1960s.

A minority of better candidates did address the dynamics of the question and considered social and political change as they applied to political parties and other social movements. Such accounts normally included detailed appraisals of changes to the Labour Party along with the growth of new political movements, globalisation and the influence of the growth of the European Community on British politics.

## ***Section B – Religion***

### ***Question 4***

- (a) This question was generally well answered by candidates. Most provided answers that considered statistics on religious participation, such as church attendance, the growth of New Religious Movements (NRMs), the development of rationality and science in society and the disengagement of the Church. Some candidates were unable to score all the marks available here because their explanations failed to show how the evidence identified could be taken as evidence of a decline in the importance of religion.

A minority of candidates wrote unnecessary, over-long descriptive accounts of the secularisation debate. While a few, bizarrely, having correctly identified and explained one piece of evidence then presented a second response that opposed or contradicted their first answer, ie here is a reason for decline, here is a reason for no decline. Centres should note that this question typically requires explanation rather than evaluation of the points identified.

- (b) The most typical response to this question was to identify a number of examples of recent religious activity or growth in belief systems, such as the development of NRMs, fundamentalism, New Age movements and so on, and to consider these in the light of the question set. In poorer answers it was simply assumed that to provide such a list was sufficient to justify the quotation from the Item. Better candidates, however, looked a little more deeply and evaluatively at their examples, often placing them in the context of wider debates on the influence of religion today.

Some candidates failed to appreciate the global aspect of the question, focusing exclusively on Britain. Some others provided timeless accounts of the theoretical debate on secularisation. In

each of these accounts marks could be scored for relevant material but they were unlikely to access the highest band in the mark scheme.

Some candidates spent far too long on this question, seriously limiting the amount of time they had to devote to the rest of the paper.

### ***Question 5***

Most candidates had a good knowledge and understanding of the debate on religion and social change. The answers here could be divided into three broad approaches. The first, and normally the weakest, provided descriptive accounts, in varying degrees of detail, from Marx, Durkheim and Weber. The second approach took this a stage further, broadening the theoretical range, usually by the inclusion of neo-Marxist and feminist views. The third, and usually highest scoring, approach showed understanding of the theoretical debate, and developed this with references to recent empirical evidence on social change or conservatism. Many candidates showed an impressive understanding of religion in a global context.

In general, on this question the knowledge and understanding of candidates were significantly stronger than their skills of interpretation, analysis and evaluation.

### ***Question 6***

The point has been made many times in these reports that candidates should answer the question set rather than writing on the topic in general. This question provided some very good examples of candidates ignoring that plea. In many cases it was difficult to determine whether the answer was indeed a response to Question 6 or to Question 5. Such candidates merely provided timeless and stateless descriptive accounts of the classic perspectives on religion with little or no reference to the question.

Fortunately, better answers, of which there were many, showed an impressive grasp by the candidates of the roles and functions of religion in society today. There were many in-depth analyses of the different perspectives and considerable awareness of empirical examples of religion bringing unity or social division. Again, the better answers were usually those where candidates were able to use their empirical material to build on and to develop their understanding of the arguments forwarded from the different theoretical perspectives.

## ***Section C – World Sociology***

### ***Question 7***

- (a) It was inevitable that many candidates offered the recent Tsunami as one of their environmental problems. Other problems regularly offered included pollution caused by factories and traffic, chemical and oil degradation of land, deforestation and water pollution. With each example, the critical factor in enabling the candidate to score fully was their ability to show how this linked to the issue of development for communities and the transnational impact of the issue. A broad interpretation was allowed here to accept sociological and socio-political impacts, along with the most obvious physical impacts of such problems.

Most candidates managed this question reasonably well in terms of the identification, but some found the explanations more difficult and resorted simply to expanding the identification into a more lengthy description. Such answers could not access all the marks available for this question.

- (b) Weaker responses to this question offered a repeat of the answer given to part (a). Better answers considered development in a broader context and looked at the impact of development

on the environment, usually through consideration of a range of examples, good or bad. The best answers were from candidates who were able to integrate, briefly, the views from different perspectives and to focus on the question of inevitability that development would cause damage. In many cases the notion of a trade-off was considered in a pragmatic response to the issues.

### ***Question 8***

This was a very popular question, with responses reflecting a very wide range of abilities from candidates. Candidates from many centres are now familiar with a wide range of theoretical and empirical material on the process of development. The views of Rostow, Frank, Hayter, Sklair, Wallerstein and Giddens featured in many answers. Poorer responses tended to provide a simple juxtaposition of modernisation and dependency theories, usually using just Rostow and Frank. Better answers looked at the issues in more depth, drawing on a wider range of sources and integrating a good range of empirical examples. Some impressive detail from the developing world was provided by some of the better candidates.

### ***Question 9***

Some weaker candidates saw this as an alternative opportunity to provide a juxtaposition of the views of Rostow and Frank. Better candidates, however, realised an opportunity to explore a range of social, economic, environmental and social issues linked to development and population growth. Many candidates considered Malthusian and neo-Malthusian views and compared and contrasted these with other explanations or projections for the world population. Issues such as education, the role of women, patriarchy, the role of government policies, cultural change and the economic value of children featured in such answers. Again, it was pleasing to note an impressive ability by some candidates to provide a very comprehensive understanding of the theoretical context of the debates along with a considerable and detailed knowledge of relevant empirical examples.

## **Unit SC5W – Theory and Methods**

### ***Section A***

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

- (a) Many candidates identified triangulation as the appropriate term but methodological pluralism was also acceptable.
- (b) Most candidates scored well on this question. The most common reasons cited were to avoid ‘going native’, to allow the researcher to ask questions, to make it easier to get into or out of a group, to avoid deceiving subjects, and to make it easier to record data.

Some candidates failed to secure all the marks available because they did not explain their reasons with sufficient clarity.

- (c) Many candidates were able to identify and explain two criticisms. The most common criticisms used were the risk of getting too close to subjects, too much personal influence or judgement, unreliability, the lack of generalisability and too much reliance on the experience and judgements of a researcher.

Criticisms relating only to specific methods – ie not able to be generalised to qualitative methods as a whole – were not acceptable as answers to this question.

- (d) The question referred candidates to the Items as a focus for considering participant observation as a research tool. From the Items and question wording ‘particularly suitable’, it was hoped that candidates would see that the groups under consideration were difficult or delicate to research and respond accordingly. Many candidates saw this and responded well, providing a good focus on the particular suitability of the method in each instance and for similar research, possibly citing one or two empirical examples. Weaker candidates failed to see the subtleties here and responded with a much more generalised advantages and disadvantages of participant observation answer.

## ***Section B***

### ***Question 2***

This question provided a fairly broad area from which to draw material in response. Weaker answers tended to focus solely on the practical grounds linked to research, mainly time, money and staffing (though a few candidates did not understand what ‘practical grounds’ were). Better answers gave a wider review of the research conundrum, considering the ethical and theoretical factors alongside the practical factors. Many candidates showed an impressive understanding of the issues and were able to integrate the empirical work in a debate that had solid theoretical underpinning. Where theoretical factors were incorporated in weaker responses, the structure was usually a juxtaposition between positivist and anti-positivist or interpretivist views. More complex answers took an in-depth look at the theoretical debate and considered individual perspectives such as functionalism, Marxism, feminism, interactionism and postmodernism and their views on the key aspects of research.

### ***Question 3***

Some candidates interpreted this as a methods question and tried to piece together a response linking structured interviews with structured observation. In some cases, they simply moved straight on to a positivist versus interpretivist juxtaposition. For those concentrating solely on the practicalities of research methods it was hard to find relevant sections to reward from the mark scheme.

The more usual and anticipated response focused on structural perspectives and offered contrasts with alternative views of society such as action theorists or postmodernists. Answers varied in the range of structural approaches considered. Weaker answers tended to focus mainly on Marxism or functionalism. Stronger responses dealt with both of these and, sometimes, with feminism and the New Right. In these instances, better answers were able to distinguish between, and reference differing branches of, the perspectives, such as Marxist feminist, radical feminist, liberal feminist, etc, and link each of these to analyses showing different understandings of society or aspects of it. Some responses to this question were outstanding, showing a very sophisticated understanding of theoretical issues.

## **Unit SC5C – Coursework**

### ***General Comments***

The January entry for SC5C continued to be small, although there were a limited number of large centres that entered this January. This was not always a successful decision, particularly where candidates had simply revamped their SC3C proposal from summer 2004, with a lack of depth, insight or theoretical understanding. There were also examples of coursework that was well focused and linked throughout with clear theory, but was too ‘thin’ in the evidence and evaluation/conclusion sections. General observation from a number of moderators showed an increase in the submission of single or very small entries and that some of these centres were ‘testing the water’ with substantially over-marked pieces of work.

There were also some original and very impressive pieces within the recommended 3500 word limit that rigorously applied the precise criteria laid down in the mark scheme. Examples included the emergence of health-related investigations, ‘Britishness’: belonging and identity amongst British-born Chinese’ and the ‘changing cultural identity with being European’.

The majority of candidates did apply the **one research method**, as stated in the 2005 specification, and limited the number of aims/objectives they carried through. Unfortunately, there were still a large number of candidates that produced overlong coursework and failed to offer either section or a total word count. This coursework lacked a clear focus, resulting in the candidates trying to achieve too much.

In the January series, we have seen a decline in problematic **ethical issues**. However, there were some candidates who produced work that was not appropriate for Advanced level. Examples included research into teenage sexuality and the study of pornography and men’s magazines. Centres should familiarise themselves with the British Sociological Association’s statement of ethical practice, the AQA Sociology Teachers’ Guide, and ask their coursework adviser for guidance wherever there is a doubt.

**Centre administration** continues to be of mixed quality. Would centres kindly ensure the following:

- Candidate Record Forms (CRFs) are completed in full and match the marks given on the Centre Mark Sheet (CMS).
- The CRF is for the 2005 entry.
- The second and third copies (pink and yellow copies) of the CMS are sent to the moderator with the centre’s sample.
- The Centre Declaration Sheet (CDS) is signed by all the centre teachers involved in moderation and the head of centre.
- A full bibliography, appendices and example page of a research diary are attached at the back of the coursework.
- The coursework is attached only by treasury tags and not placed in plastic wallets.
- No annotation is made on the coursework by the centre teachers. All comments should be on the reverse of the CRF with the marks awarded.

### ***Assessment Criteria***

#### ***Context***

Once again, this was the strongest section of the coursework, where marking was most clearly in line with that of the moderator. In some cases it also continued to be the longest section of coursework, where candidates listed a wide range of sources, many of which were rather dated (with no recognition of such), with concepts being defined as in AS, but not elaborated upon or tied into the rationale. Conversely, there were candidates who failed to develop their context beyond two or three sources as used in the AS proposal.

A vast amount of semi-plagiarised textbook material continued to be presented which, for many candidates, meant a clear lack of focus on the aims and objectives that had been identified in the rationale. Stronger candidates were able to present a more limited range of highly relevant material, securely placed within a theoretical context and supported by confident identification and elaboration of relevant concepts. These sources were well used and explicitly linked to the focus of their research. These candidates met the requirements of the 10-12 band – an ‘understanding of the broader sociological context’.

## ***Methodology***

As stated earlier, the majority of candidates did use one method, but in a lot of cases it often lacked depth and the application of the method was weak. As stated in the June 2004 Report, candidates must offer an appropriate justification of its strengths and potential weaknesses. Reference to the practical, ethical and theoretical issues was given but these were completed superficially and in a generalised way.

The methods selected appeared to be centre specific – questionnaires to every year group in the school; semi-structured interviews with selected members of the sixth form; or content analysis with one tabloid or one broadsheet newspaper.

Some confusion was still evident concerning sampling, with candidates presenting a rehearsed list of the different sampling techniques without understanding why and how their chosen sampling method suited their research. Similarly, validity and reliability were still misunderstood terms and ethical issues were simplistic, eg ‘If I use 16-18 year olds I won’t need parental consent’.

On a positive note, candidates were able to justify the questions they used in their research as they apply to their rationale, effectively piloted them and made adjustments from the feedback. It was particularly impressive to see more piloting used with qualitative research methods.

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 had absorbed previous advice about applying theoretical, ethical and practical issues to their own research. Research documents were placed in the appendix (thus not adding to the word count) and analysed in the main text.

## ***Evidence (Application, Presentation, Interpretation and Analysis)***

This continued to be a weak section. Candidates were being rewarded in the 11-14 band and higher for a section that consisted of a superficial presentation and analysis of results. The presentation may have looked impressive with the available ICT packages, but few bar charts, pie charts and graphs were particularly useful or comprehensible. Theory, context and concepts simply vanished in what became all too often just a presentation of statistics.

Many candidates assumed that the data shows them what they want it to show – which on occasions was obvious from the start of the research study. Candidates should be made aware that analytical skills are more than simply telling us that – they should adopt a questioning attitude and attempt to look for an alternative meaning, perhaps even attempting to disprove it? Linked specifically to this is the quality of data collected which is to be analysed. If only ten questionnaires are completed, with five factual questions, only a limited amount of information will be generated. The quality rarely compensates for this, and does not generate the sensitivity of interpretation and analysis and the level of sociological insight required for these higher mark bands. Candidates should also address the timing issue with their coursework. This section often appeared rushed and candidates failed to recognise the significant amount of marks available.

Within this section, stronger candidates were more systematic, selective and used the evidence to enhance their understanding beyond description. Analysis also included explicit reference to the rationale, theory, context and concepts.

There continues to be an increase in qualitative research generated in the main from unstructured interviews. Candidates should be aware that if they are going to rely on one interview, it needs to be well planned, piloted and applied in order to generate the quality of information to allow imaginative, impressive and insightful analysis.

It is essential that centres continue to refer to exemplar material from AQA that shows depth and insight, thus allowing the work to reach higher mark bands.

### ***Rationale, Evaluation and Conclusions***

General issues that have been made in previous reports still remain. The rationale on the whole was clear, with most candidates able to offer an identifiable aim or hypothesis complemented by one or two aims or objectives. The length continues to vary and, on the whole, this was not a problem except in those cases where the development of an AS hypothesis or aim did not take place and instead we were left with a very short section of 150 words. The previous recommendation of between 250-350 words would allow the candidate to outline clearly their reasons for choice, offer a relevant sociological context for the study with associated tight hypothesis or aim and a very limited number of objectives. The strength of many higher scoring candidates' work was to provide a succinct and relevant rationale which is referred to explicitly through each section of the coursework.

The quality of work in this section was mixed. Weaker candidates struggled because they did not address all of the issues expected, which included the need for clear conclusions, evaluation of the method and future recommendations. It often appeared that insufficient time was being devoted to achieve these.

Evaluative skills can be demonstrated throughout the coursework, eg by a critical examination of contextual sources, a review of the proposed method and analysis of the data generated. Weaker candidates still preferred to offer an uncritical 'didn't I do well?' with a complete inability to recognise that they were identifying what was already obvious. Stronger candidates were able to review the whole research process as a much more problematic one and identify what they have been able to learn from their mistakes and how they could be rectified in the future. These were practicable and achievable recommendations.

Regrettably, few candidates have yet appreciated the opportunities a research diary can offer in the evaluation of the method used. Where candidates were able to refer directly to specific problems they had encountered, their overall evaluation of the research process was enhanced.

Higher scoring candidates were able to tie everything together in a structured and clear way. The evaluation of method was insightful, recommendations for future research were informed by the strengths and weaknesses of their own study, and thoughtful sociological conclusions were drawn to the hypothesis or aim and objectives as stated in the rationale. They were further rewarded if they drew from other previous sections.

## Unit SCY6

### *General*

There was little evidence of candidates failing to complete their answers in the time available, and in a few cases there was evidence that candidates had actually planned their answers before writing them. As last year, many candidates wrote excessively long and often poorly organised answers to the part (a) questions. A number of candidates also continue to make explicit synoptic links to all areas of the specification (and especially to the other substantive topics), regardless of the ones that the question actually calls for. In a significant number of scripts, the poor quality of candidates' written communication and the inability to follow through an argument to a logical conclusion impaired the answer.

Question 1 proved to be by far the more popular question of the two in this unit. A very small number of candidates answered Question 2.

### *Question 1: Crime and Deviance*

- (a) Most candidates were able to identify at least one problem, but many showed serious flaws in their understanding. The major errors were to treat victim studies either as official statistics or as self-report studies. Each of these mistakes led to inappropriate limitations being identified or, if identified, inadequately explained. Some candidates spent time describing the advantages before identifying any limitations. A very common response was to refer to issues such as validity, reliability, etc without either explaining what these terms meant, how victim studies suffered from such problems, or what limitations this imposed on their use in the study of crime or deviance. On the positive side many did identify two different limitations with respect to victim studies, such as issues of concealment, lying, omission of white collar or victimless crime, etc. Some candidates failed to gain marks for their explanations when it became evident that they were describing the problems as ones of self-report studies or police statistics.
- (b) This part of the question was generally answered competently. However, a few candidates presented a run-through of different theories of deviance without significant focus on labelling, while others had only a rudimentary and flawed understanding of labelling. Most, however, were able to present at least a reasonable account of some of the main features of the approach, such as the self-fulfilling prophecy, primary and secondary deviance, master status, formation of subcultures, etc. Although these were not always conceptually clear accounts, some sophisticated answers showed a high level of theoretical understanding and conceptual detail. Many were able to draw on knowledge of relevant studies, particularly of deviance amplification. Many were able to identify one or two criticisms of labelling theory, though these were frequently tagged on at the end and not really discussed.
- (c) A large number of candidates saw the various substantive topic areas as the most appropriate way to organise their answers. However, this tended to produce responses that were descriptive and lacking in theoretical awareness. At worst, such answers either offered accounts of crimes committed by men and women in each of the specified areas, eg domestic violence in families, benefit fraud in poverty etc. Alternatively, the answer lost focus by giving each topic area in turn as the cause of crime in general, without reference to the issue of gender differences. Such responses failed to address the question and so failed to score well for interpretation. They also generally showed few of the other AO2 skills. The most successful answers, by contrast, drew on their knowledge of sociological explanations of gender differences in crime and deviance and, in explaining these, identified the links to the substantive topics. However, evaluation was often limited, and while many candidates used the notion of social construction to explain the gender patterns found in the official statistics, few answers made this a central issue of debate. Most

answers were confined to gender differences in crime rates; few distinguished between crime and deviance, and when they did so, this was only rarely to consider that women might be more likely to be defined as deviant than men.

***Question 2: Stratification and Differentiation***

- (a) Most were able to identify at least one problem and briefly explain it. These included the problems of defining ethnic groups included in the census question on ethnicity, lower response rates among certain social groups making the results unrepresentative, problems of people lying about or exaggerating income, occupation, illegal employment, etc. Some candidates were able to identify one or two problems but were unable to explain them clearly and coherently.
- (b) Some weak answers could not muster more than one or two very basic points about meritocracy or similar. However, most candidates showed some knowledge and understanding of the functionalist theory of stratification, although many spent a good deal of time describing the theory before turning to an attempt to assess it or offer criticisms of it. This tended to produce a rather attenuated discussion of the criticisms. Better answers offered some evaluation, often from a Marxist perspective, and the best ones used a range of empirical and theoretical material to examine a number of criticisms. These included empirical evidence of ascribed inequalities of class, gender and ethnicity, mobility rates, the dysfunctions of inequality, Tumin's critique, problems of measuring functional importance, the theory's ideological assumptions or role, etc.
- (c) Many candidates responded to this part of the question by recounting the existence of various forms of inequality within the different substantive topic areas referred to in the question, such as class, gender or ethnic inequalities in education, health, poverty, etc. While these were able to score some marks for showing their knowledge of some potentially relevant information on social inequality, they were less successful in scoring marks for appropriate interpretation of what they knew in order to respond to the requirements of the question. Better answers recognised some of the theoretical issues raised by the question and responded more appropriately, for example by considering the postmodernist or other positions on the continuing salience or otherwise of class. The most successful answers combined knowledge and understanding of theoretical debates on the significance of class as against other divisions with the application of sound empirical knowledge of issues such as de-industrialisation, globalisation, the impact of new social movements such as feminism, consumption and leisure patterns, the growth of the underclass, etc.

## 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	33.5	8.2
Unit 2 (SCY2)	60	60	30.8	8.3
Unit 3 (SC3W)	60	60	34.1	7.7
Unit 3 (SC3C)	60	60	37.2	7.5
Unit 4 (SCY4)	60	60	35.6	8.3
Unit 5 (SC5W)	60	60	32.7	9.3
Unit 5 (SC5C)	60	60	39.1	8.2
Unit 6 (SCY6)	60	60	27.8	7.4

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

### Unit SCY1/Families and Households; Health; Mass Media (17668 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 (8717 candidates)

Grade	Max. mark	A	B	C	D	E
Scaled Boundary Mark	60	38	34	31	28	25
Uniform Boundary Mark	105	84	74	63	53	42

### Unit SC3W/Sociological Methods (5833 candidates)

Grade	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 SC3C/Coursework (951 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 (10384 candidates)**

Grade	Max. mark	A	B	C	D	E
Scaled Boundary Mark	60	42	38	34	30	27
Uniform Boundary Mark	90	72	63	54	45	36

**Unit SC5W/Theory and Methods (2781 candidates)**

Grade	Max. mark	A	B	C	D	E
Scaled Boundary Mark	60	42	37	32	27	22
Uniform Boundary Mark	90	72	63	54	45	36

**Unit SC5C/Coursework (1299 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 (563 candidates)**

Grade	Max. mark	A	B	C	D	E
Scaled Boundary Mark	60	41	37	33	29	25
Uniform Boundary Mark	120	96	84	72	60	48

## Advanced Subsidiary award

Provisional statistics for the award (1144 candidates)

	A	B	C	D	E
Cumulative %	13.8	34.9	59.3	81.6	94.3

## Advanced award

Provisional statistics for the award (174 candidates)

	A	B	C	D	E
Cumulative %	6.9	32.8	67.2	87.4	98.3

## 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.