



General Certificate of Education

Sociology 1191

**SCLY2 Education with Research Methods;
Health with Research Methods**

Report on the Examination

2009 examination - January series

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Set and published by the Assessment and Qualifications Alliance.

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SCLY2

Rubric

This is a new paper, with a new structure, sat by candidates for the first time. A small but significant number of candidates made rubric errors that affected their total score. The paper requires that candidates answer the 'package' of Questions 1, 2 and 3 **or** the 'package' of Questions 4, 5 and 6. Some candidates 'pick n' mixed' their questions, eg they opted for Q1, Q3 and Q5. This meant that the last question was discounted from their total marks. Others opted to answer an alternative but equally incorrect combination of questions.

Teachers are strongly advised to remind candidates, as they prepare for the examination, of exactly which questions they have been prepared for and which they should answer, and of the importance of managing their time.

Section A: Education with Research Methods

Question 1

- (a) Some candidates gave only an example, rather than an explanation, of the term, eg middle-class parents knowing their way around the school admissions system. Such answers received one mark, as did answers that only partially explained the concept.
- (b) Most candidates scored either four or six marks on this question. Popular answers included reference to subject image, peer and parental pressure, and subject channelling in schools. A few candidates deviated from the question and presented material that was more appropriate to a question on gender and achievement.
- (c) This question generated a wide range of responses covering the whole mark range. Some candidates appeared to have little or no understanding of marketisation and presented accounts of non-marketisation policies such as the tri-partite system or comprehensivisation. Answers of this quality scored in the bottom mark band. Some candidates offered a basic account of one or more appropriate policies but without linking them clearly to the creation of an education market. Typically, candidates offered the ERA, league tables, national testing, or Ofsted.

Stronger responses identified a broader range of policies or made more explicit links to an education market. The very best answers - some of which gained maximum marks - identified a good range of relevant policies, explained how they contributed to an education market and, in some cases, offered a brief critique of the policies.

- (d) Many candidates began their answer with reference to Item A and developed some of the points raised therein. A few candidates did not go much beyond the contents of the Item, while a few stronger candidates failed to mention the Item in an otherwise good quality answer. Some less effective answers presented a very generalised account, usually of labelling and teacher expectations, that was not specific to ethnicity. Other less effective responses adapted a social class answer without making clear the relationship between ethnicity and class. Others moved on to external factors, usually home culture and language issues, without having spent sufficient time on school factors. The best responses differentiated between minority ethnic groups, made links between school and non-school factors (rather than simply juxtaposing them) and referenced their arguments to appropriate studies.

Question 2

Many candidates found this a challenging question. Virtually all candidates, however, recognised that this was a 'methods in context' question and very few simply offered an account of sociological explanations of the reasons for boys' underachievement. Those that did scored, for the most part, in the bottom mark band.

The majority of candidates offered an answer that was either 'context-free' or that linked methods to the study of groups and research settings in education. Some offered an account of one of the two methods that was not contextualised in the study of boys' underachievement. This form of response scored in the lower part of the middle mark band and even the best of such answers did not get past half marks.

Some better-prepared candidates were able to link their chosen method to the study of educational issues in general. This usually took the form of identifying some of the particular research characteristics of pupils and, less often, teachers and classrooms/schools. Better versions of this type of response applied the strengths and limitations of the chosen method to these characteristics or presented a wide range of relevant research characteristics.

The strongest responses were able to take this one step further and connect some of the selected method's strengths and weaknesses to the study of the particular issue of boys' underachievement. For example, some candidates discussed the likely existence of anti-school subcultures among some under-achieving boys and the usefulness of unstructured interviews in developing trust with such pupils. A further example offered was the high political profile of this issue which meant that official statistical data was collected and made publicly available on an annual basis and therefore had a high degree of replicability and comparability.

Overall, the range and distribution of responses to this question highlights the need for centres to develop candidates' application skills.

Question 3

- (a) Most candidates achieved at least one mark, usually by stating that this is a study carried out over a long period of time. A few scored no marks, usually by simply stating 'a period of time' or similar, without qualifying the statement. Many gained two marks by reference to a study using the same cohort, or research carried out at intervals.
- (b) Most candidates scored full marks on this question. A few misunderstood the question and identified one or two research methods rather than two sampling techniques.
- (c) This was generally answered well, with many candidates identifying issues of a lack of validity, bias, exaggeration, unrepresentativeness, etc. A few candidates presented vague, commonsense notions that were not rewardable.
- (d) Surprisingly, given that a variant of this question has appeared in previous SC3W examinations, some candidates appeared not to have been taught about the use/non-use of experiments in sociological research. Some candidates read 'experiments' as 'research methods' and offered a catch-all response covering several methods. Others treated this as a participant observation question or drifted into PO once they had presented their limited knowledge and understanding of experiments. Stronger answers maintained a clear focus on the experimental method, often distinguishing between laboratory and field experiments and/or making reference to the comparative method. Typically these made reference to

experiments 'borrowed' from social psychology but it was also pleasing to see that experiments into teacher expectations were sometimes mentioned. Rosenthal and Jacobson as well as Harvey and Slatin figured here.

Section B: Health with Research Methods

Question 4

- (a) Most candidates understood this term and could offer an appropriate explanation. A few confused morbidity with mortality.
- (b) Some candidates answered this question very well, drawing on media imagery, cross-cultural or historical variations, personal control of the body, and the body as an incomplete project. Some candidates, however, appeared not to have been prepared for this question and offered vague, commonsensical notions that gained no reward.
- (c) Weaker answers offered descriptive accounts of how behaviour associated with mental illness may be seen by others. Some responses were built on the single argument of the cross-cultural variation in the categorisation of certain types of behaviour. Even well-developed versions of this answer failed to get beyond half-marks. Other responses focused on the social distribution of mental illness although sometimes, within the description of social factors, the notion of mental illness being socially defined became lost. Some moved on to discuss labelling as one of the reasons for the class, ethnicity and gender difference in rates of mental illness. The best responses had a clear idea of the ways in which mental illness may be socially defined. Goffman, Szasz and Foucault often figured in these accounts, as did reference to notions of master status, stigma, labelling and the power of medical professionals.
- (d) This was generally answered quite well, with most candidates having at least a basic understanding of the core elements in the functionalist view of the medical profession. A few candidates were limited to recycling Item C but other, more effective, answers often developed notions of the sick role, affective neutrality, and the traits of a profession. The best responses made effective use of alternative views of the medical profession with Weberian, Marxist and feminist critiques figuring strongly. Ideas of exclusion strategies (gendered or otherwise), ideological functions for capitalism or patriarchy, and occupational domination were often at least referred to in good quality responses.

Question 5

Many candidates found this a challenging question. Virtually all candidates, however, recognised that this was a 'methods in context' question and very few simply offered an account of sociological explanations of the relationship between ethnicity and access to health care. Those that did scored, for the most part, in the bottom mark band.

The majority of candidates offered an answer that was either 'context-free' or that linked methods to the study of groups and research settings in health. Some offered an account of one of the two methods that was not contextualised in the study of ethnicity and access to health care. This form of response scored in the lower part of the middle mark band and even the best of such answers did not get past half marks.

Some better-prepared candidates were able to link their chosen method to the study of health issues in general. This usually took the form of identifying some of the particular research characteristics of patients from different ethnic groups and, less often, of doctors and medical settings. Better versions of this type of response applied the strengths and limitations of the chosen method to these characteristics or presented a wide range of relevant research characteristics.

The strongest responses were able to take this one step further and connect some of the selected method's strengths and weaknesses to the study of the particular issue of ethnicity and access to health care. For example, some candidates discussed communication issues, especially English sometimes not being the home language. This was then linked to either questionnaires or unstructured interviews.

Overall, the range and distribution of responses to this question highlights the need for centres to develop candidates' application skills.

Question 6

- (a) Most candidates achieved at least one mark, usually by stating that this is a study carried out over a long period of time. A few scored no marks, usually through simply stating 'a period of time' or similar, without qualifying the statement. Many gained two marks by reference to a study using the same cohort, or research carried out at intervals.
- (b) Most candidates dealt effectively with this question, identifying issues such as gaining consent, being able to ask questions openly, or being able to record data openly. One or two candidates misread 'overt' for 'covert' and therefore scored no marks. Others failed to spot the emphasis on overt and offered advantages pertaining to observation generally. Sometimes these still scored as the point made was relevant to overt observation. Some mentioned 'ethical advantages' without specifying the nature of the ethical advantage; these scored no marks.
- (c) Some candidates appeared unsure as to what field experiments are and often referred to problems with observation in general. These sometimes scored when they were relevant to field experiments. Well-prepared candidates identified problems with controlling variables, the Hawthorne Effect, and a lack of informed consent.
- (d) Many candidates achieved around half marks with their account of personal and public documents. Such accounts were often quite generalised and did not differentiate between different types of documents. Where differentiation was attempted, this sometimes became repetitive with the same points being made for both personal and public documents. Although most candidates could produce at least a basic account of the problems of using personal documents, many were less secure in their understanding of public documents. Stronger answers made good use of methodological concerns, issues of validity, representativeness and reliability, or had a developed understanding of a range of forms of documentary evidence.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the [Results statistics](#) page of the AQA Website.