

Report on the Components

June 2009

1990/MS/R/09

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This report on the Examination provides information on the performance of candidates which it is hoped will be useful to teachers in their preparation of candidates for future examinations. It is intended to be constructive and informative and to promote better understanding of the syllabus content, of the operation of the scheme of assessment and of the application of assessment criteria.

Reports should be read in conjunction with the published question papers and mark schemes for the Examination.

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GCSE Sociology (1990)

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1990/01 Paper 1

This year the compulsory topic in Section A dealt with Family and Identity. In 2010 the topic for Section A will deal with Power and Citizenship. The compulsory Section B question dealt with Power and Citizenship in 2009, whilst in 2010 it will focus on the topic of Family and Identity. The option units in Section C remain the same from year to year and this year, as always, Crime, Deviance and Social Control was by far the most popular option with only a minority of candidates choosing one of the other options – Religion or Protest and Social Movements. All centres and students are to be congratulated for their hard work on the paper. A real variety of responses were seen by the team, from the sociologically strong to those of simple commonsense. The vast majority of students had clearly been entered for the correct tier of paper and this enabled them to demonstrate their knowledge appropriately and well. Some students demonstrated poor examination technique, however, and to maximise their marks it is crucial that they develop their skills and focus on the specific demands of the question set. Several candidates answered all of the Section C option questions which clearly meant that their answers were short and typically superficial. It is thus crucial that examination rubric is clear for all candidates. On the whole, time seemed to be used well by most candidates and very few ran out of time.

Comments on Individual Questions

Section A

Q1a The vast majority of candidates were able to use the source to correctly pick out the two relevant answers. However, a number of candidates scored one mark or, occasionally, zero.

Examiner Hint:

Students should have regular practice at these types of data analysis questions.

Q1b Many candidates were able to describe what is meant by an observation with some making some really good points about the different types i.e. covert/overt/participant/non-participant. At the other extreme, however, candidates described an observation as 'when you observe someone'. They need to ensure that their answers demonstrate their knowledge in order to be credited. Most candidates were also able to give examples to support their points.

Examiner Hint:

During revision time ensure all Foundation candidates have prepared definitions and examples for all the research methods and evidence as stated in the specification.

Q1c Candidates typically showed good knowledge and understanding of reasons why the evidence in the source might not be accurate. A number of candidates ignored the relatively straightforward points in the source, however, (such as adapted source/student coursework) and instead focused solely on the content. This often left them without the required range of ideas. Some answers tended towards the generic and candidates should be given plenty of practice in analysing specific sources of information in order to best prepare them for this section of the examination.

Examiner Hint:

Candidates should directly link the points they make to issues of accuracy in the source.

Q1d This question is best approached as a question about representativeness and generaliseability (although candidates do not need to use these terms) and therefore candidates should be encouraged to look at two reasons why the information in the source might **not** be useful – in this particular case as evidence of the experience of **all** children. Sample composition, small sample size, and location were the most common responses. A minority of candidates, however, still tried to say why the evidence was useful. When candidates focused on the key word, all, in the question, good, sociological responses were seen that scored highly.

Examiner Hint:

Ensure students are well versed in issues of generaliseability and representativeness and can apply these to specific issues in a source. Use of past questions should prove helpful here.

Q1e Most candidates were able to describe a range of sociological methods and were rewarded for this. Increasing numbers also described sociological evidence which improved the marks they were awarded but there are still many candidates that ignore this requirement in the question. It was good to see that less candidates than previously simply produced a generic methods answer rather than trying to link the methods/evidence selected to the specific research focus in the question. This is not a general question about methods and hence candidates who did this did not score highly in AO2. The best candidates referred to both primary methods and secondary evidence and focused on the specific research topic. This must be done if candidates are going to score in Level 3.

Examiner Hint:

Candidates are advised to select the methods that best fit the research topic, ensuring they use both primary and secondary evidence to do so.

Overall, question one was answered well, suggesting good exam technique preparation for the topic of research methods. Methodological advantages and disadvantages were usefully employed by many candidates to help them answer the questions set. Students that did not perform so well typically either missed out questions in this section or answered in a generic, descriptive manner with insufficient focus on the sources.

Section B

Q2a This question on factors that affect voting behaviour was generally well answered and saw many candidates scoring full marks.

Examiner Hint:

Students must focus on the specific demands of the question set in order to score highly.

Q2b Answers for this question were very mixed. Some excellent responses were seen discussing both democracies and dictatorships with relevant examples which were duly rewarded. There was some very topical and contemporary evidence used here (i.e. Zimbabwe) alongside the more predictable examples (i.e. UK and Nazi Germany). At the other end of the scale, however, some candidates clearly had no idea what was meant by either a democracy or a dictatorship, even though both concepts are clearly in the specification.

Examiner Hint:

Candidates should be encouraged to focus on explaining three distinct points that directly address the question in order to maximise their marks. All elements of the specification must be covered during the course.

Q2c On the whole, many strong responses were produced for this question, with candidates demonstrating wide ranging and accurate sociological knowledge and understanding across a wide range of topic areas. The use of contemporary examples and evidence to substantiate points made was also really good. Common areas of discussion were politics, legislation, the workplace, family life and changing norms and values of males and females. Many candidates, however, wasted time writing about what the power differences between men and women were like in the past and weaker candidates tended to focus their answers upon if males and females should have equal power rather than if they actually do or not.

Examiner Hint:

Many students did look at arguments both for and against the claim but the team did still see too many one sided responses. Candidates need to recognise that this is an evaluation question and structure their responses appropriately.

Overall, this question produced a wide range of responses and was a good differentiator between those discussing sociology and those simply talking generally and with little accurate knowledge. Some centres were clearly prepared very well indeed for this compulsory question, whilst for others candidates' knowledge and understanding of the topic area was sparse.

Section C

As stated earlier, the overwhelming majority of candidates answered either question three or four, question three being the most popular. A minority did not score as well as they should have in this section as they either failed to follow the rubric (i.e. answered too many Section C questions) or answered a question that they had clearly not been prepared for in class. Centres are advised to make sure that candidates are clear about the rubric of the exam, particularly as it applies to this option section.

Q3a This question was answered very well indeed by the majority of candidates with many scoring full marks.

Examiner Hint:

Students need to ensure that they differentiate their two points clearly, numbering may help them here.

Q3b This question was not well answered on the whole and many students were not prepared for discussing sociological ways of measuring crime, instead giving very vague answers such as 'asking the public', 'listen to 999 calls' and 'checking CCTV footage'. Statistics, Victim Surveys (BCS and/or local) and Self Report Studies are all identified in the specification and textbooks and candidates are expected to know about them.

Examiner Hint:

Students must be familiar with all aspects of the specification in order to be able to access all the questions set.

Q3c Some good responses were seen here with candidates seemingly well prepared to evaluate the claim. Several engaged with ideas of financial need, lack of opportunities, poor education, differential socialisation, peer pressure and boredom/thrills when answering. Clearly they were well rewarded for this. Unfortunately, a minority of candidates misunderstood the term 'socialised' in the question and so talked in commonsense terms about people committing crime because they were lonely etc. Many one sided answers were also seen and candidates need to be reminded to address both the 'for' and 'against' arguments.

Examiner Hint:

Arguments do not need to be balanced but there does need to be evidence of a debate in all Section B and C part c questions.

Q4a This question was answered well by most candidates with only a minority referring to formal agencies. Some students clearly had no idea what was meant by an 'informal agency'.

Examiner Hint:

Regular practice of these part a questions with teacher feedback should help the candidates to focus better on what they are being asked about in specific questions.

Q4b Some very good answers were seen for this question. Most candidates had clear (and in some cases quite extreme) ideas of possible solutions to crime. The better candidates focused not only on punishment but on socialization as well and scored highly for this. A minority of candidates misunderstood the term 'solutions' in the question and talked instead about why people commit crime and obviously could not be rewarded for this.

Examiner Hint:

Candidates should be reminded to ensure that they are answering specifically the question set.

Q4c This question was tackled quite well on the whole, although many candidates did tend to concentrate on the gender aspect of the question to the detriment of age. The more able candidates considered both factors. A minority of candidates seemed to ignore the question's reference to both gender and age and instead simply talked generically about reasons why people might commit crime – lack of money, racism etc. This could only be credited at a low level.

Examiner Hint:

Candidates should be reminded that a range of sociological (rather than personal) evidence and ideas needs to be the focus for their answers in order to score highly and that they must focus on the specific demands of the question set.

Q5a This was not a popular question with very few candidates attempting it. Those that did typically produced good answers showing knowledge of different protest groups.

Examiner Hint:

Students need to both identify and describe in all Section B and C part a questions.

Q5b As above. Success here seemed to depend on whether the candidate was prepared for this topic or was simply 'having a go'. Those that were clearly prepared made some good points and used examples to demonstrate ways a group can protest without breaking the law. Other candidates, however, produced very limited responses here writing a generic and commonsense description. The lack of sociological knowledge and understanding in such answers meant they did not score well.

Examiner Hint:

Remind candidates which of the options they should be answering on in Section C – perhaps getting them to score a line through questions that don't apply to them at the beginning of the examination might prove helpful.

Q5c Typically answers here were generalised and did not demonstrate specific sociological arguments or examples of protest groups. Some candidates who were prepared for the topic, however, engaged well with the question and used topical examples to help support their points. Without case study examples candidates will not score in Level 3. Most did produce arguments both 'for' and 'against' but again a significant number of candidates did not enter into the debate.

Examiner Hint:

Candidates should ensure that they are answering on the correct option topic and that they are formulating a debate in their response. Discussion and 'argument' in the classroom is often particularly useful for developing their evaluation skills.

Q6a The same trends seen in question 5 were again evident throughout this question, however less candidates answered question six than question five. Often reasons were very generalised and some candidates who answered this question were not specifically prepared for it.

Examiner Hint:

See 5a.

Q6b Answers here were typified by general points that contained little sociological knowledge and understanding and it was clear that a number of candidates choosing this question to answer were not prepared for it. Most answers seen were very descriptive and contained little evidence. The best responses used case study material, for example 'Fathers for Justice' and Greenpeace, to exemplify points made and had a number of distinct ideas to discuss about how social movements can become successful in society.

Examiner Hint:

Candidates should have knowledge of different social movements – what they do, how and why – and clear definitions of these for revision.

Q6c Comments as above for 6b. The best candidates explored ideas of fairness and equality in terms of giving people a voice, changing society and allowing for alternatives to the norm. Again case study materials and examples typified responses from better candidates. Far too many, however, had little knowledge of how social movements might make society a better place to live and thus produced only limited responses.

Examiner Hint:

Explicit examples/case studies are expected in order for candidates to score in Level 3.

Q7a This was not a popular question and seemed to be answered frequently by candidates who were not specifically prepared to answer on 'Religion' in the exam, the odd candidate from a centre where all other candidates answered on a different option topic, for example. Most candidates who answered the question were able to identify two ways the UK is less religious today than in the past but descriptions to support points varied enormously in quality. Most popular responses tended to involve declining church attendance, decrease in the marriage rate, increase in the divorce rate and the declining influence of religion in society. From centres that had clearly studied religion as a topic, answers were good.

Examiner Hint:

Students must be able to both identify and describe their selected points in order to score well.

Q7b This was not a popular question and seemed to be answered too frequently by candidates who were not specifically prepared to answer on 'Religion' in the exam, the odd candidate from a centre where all other candidates answered on a different option topic. Many answers revolved around commonsense notions and generalized points that did not use any case study material.

Examiner Hint:

Some candidates debated the issue which did not get them any extra marks as question b should be a one sided response using a range of different ideas and evidence.

Q7c This was not a popular question and seemed to be answered frequently by candidates who were not specifically prepared to answer on 'Religion' in the exam, the odd candidate from a centre where all other candidates answered on a different option topic. Several candidates, however, talked well about the way religion was a norm of the past and thus expected of people. Better candidates also differentiated between different social characteristics and religions and thus recognised that how religious a person is is actually difficult to measure.

Examiner Hint:

Candidates should ensure that they are answering the correct option topic and that they are formulating a debate in their part c response.

Q8a Very few candidates answered this question, even less than for question 7. Some good answers seen here from those that were prepared but unfortunately the same trend as in Q7 occurred with some candidates answering on this topic despite not having been explicitly prepared for it. A minority of candidates did well to consider multiculturalism and diversity here.

Examiner Hint:

In describing the two reasons candidates should check that they are all discrete and that they are not simply rewording and repeating what has already been said.

Q8b As above in Q7, the differentiator here seemed to be whether or not the candidate was specifically prepared to answer on this topic. Where this was not the case, answers were generalised and showed little or no sociological understanding, often not engaging with the concept of gender at all. In other cases, some relevant examples were given to explain how gender can affect religious experience and behaviour, focusing on case study material and specific religions.

Examiner Hint:

Candidates should ensure they have sufficient range and depth in their response (3 good, discrete points) in order to access Level 3 marks.

Q8c As above. Where they were prepared, candidates often engaged well with the question and were able to give relevant points as to whether religion in the UK is in decline. Some good sociology was seen here that utilised contemporary examples well. However, there were a significant number of candidates who produced a simplistic/commonsense response that prevented them from scoring highly here. A few candidates ignored the 'UK' in the question and talked very generally indeed.

Examiner Hint:

Candidates should be encouraged to exemplify points they make with contemporary examples as well as those more traditional ones found in the textbooks.

Overall, candidates need to be reminded that in order to score well their answers need to be sociological. Therefore they should not choose an option question for which they have not been prepared in class. Candidates find it difficult to score highly in Section C if they just 'have a go' at what looks like an interesting or easier question.

1990/02 Paper 2

General Comments

This year, the compulsory topic in Section A dealt with the module of Work and Employment. In 2010, Section A will deal with Education. The compulsory Section B dealt with the module Education in 2009, whilst in 2010 it will focus on the module of Work and Employment. The option units in Section C remain the same from year to year and again Poverty was popular, as was Mass Media, with only a minority of candidates choosing Contemporary Social Change.

In 2009, Paper 4 appears to have again differentiated successfully. There remains a divide between candidates who rely on common sense for their answers, possibly having been entered for the wrong tier; and those who have revised and used sociological evidence, relevant contemporary examples and terminology. Again there seemed to be an improvement in the standard of achievement by some candidates, especially in reference to Section A question e. However, some candidates still lack knowledge in certain areas of the syllabus.

It was pleasing to see that the majority of candidates answered the correct number of questions. This year there seemed to be some candidates who may have been entered for the wrong tier. These Foundation Tier candidates used sociological knowledge well and could have been entered for the Higher Tier. For further advice see the comments on individual questions.

Comments on Individual Questions

Section A

Generally candidates are prepared well for Section A. However, a few centres are still providing generic responses of validity, reliability and representativeness in every answer. These centres need to recognise which research issue is being discussed in each question.

Q1a. From the evidence in source A many students failed to gain 2 marks either not reading the words “working women” or not including statistics in their answer. The marks given are for showing ability to analyse data and thus candidates need to practice reading data (both quantitative and qualitative) and showing understanding.

Q1b. Most candidates were at least able to give some description of interviews. Best Responses used types of interviews as their examples e.g. structured/ unstructured.

Examiner Hint: Candidates need to revise clear definitions of each method.

Q1c. Candidates were divided by the responses to this question. Some candidates did not focus on accuracy (validity) and thus they did not score highly. Many candidates wrote exclusively about sampling and representativeness.

Examiner Hint: Candidates need to revise the disadvantages of using methods.

Q1d. Candidates performed well on this question and knew to look for issues of representativeness. However, a minority are still looking at generic issues of validity. Better answers considered the shift work in supermarkets and whether the same staff continually work the same shifts, thus causing an issue with representativeness.

Examiner Hint: Candidates need to practise considering issues of representativeness and their impact on different aims.

Q1e. Candidates seemed even better prepared for the requirements of this question. Candidates seem to have knowledge of questionnaires, interviews and observation. Often centres failed to use any secondary evidence, thus stopping them gaining AO1 marks above 3, despite the question asking for methods **and evidence**.

Examiner Hint: Candidates should rehearse matching methods to aims.

Section B

Q2a. This question yielded mixed responses. Many candidates found the task manageable and had clearly revised their knowledge of the different types of schools as clearly laid out in the syllabus. However, some candidates failed to score marks either over confusion over what the word alternative meant.

Examiner Hint: Candidates need to practise the necessary format of identified answer and then description. Candidates also need to revise their key concepts as laid out in the syllabus.

Q2b. Most candidates engaged with this question well. Best responses discussed ideas such as the hidden curriculum; uniform and subject choice. There were less underdeveloped answers this year, which was pleasing to see, however, a small number of candidates did not read the question and ignored gender altogether, or they misunderstood socialise, and discussed peer groups and not schools themselves.

Examiner Hint: Candidates need to revise concepts in preparation of all areas of socialisation.

Q2c. Candidates all engaged with the statement, however not all had enough sociological knowledge to score highly when discussing it. Those who scored highly considered the importance of exams and qualifications and described other functions of schools, such as the economic role, socialisation and social control. These candidates demonstrated an impressive level of knowledge and understanding, even managing to include some concepts. Weaker candidates could not offer more than one idea for and one against, often relying on assertion only.

Examiner Hint: Candidates need to ensure they revise work with an evaluative approach, always considering opposition.

Section C

Q3 and Q4: The Mass Media

This seemed to be a more popular module again this year. Candidates need to have the terminology and knowledge to discuss their answers. Due to the constant change in media technology candidates need to have access to recent sociological text on this subject.

Question 3

This was the less popular media choice, and less successfully answered.

Q3a. Candidates who failed to score well here ignored the term “recent”. Weak candidates did not score marks with answers such as TV and radio.

Examiner Hint: Candidates need access to contemporary evidence/studies.

Q3b. Candidates again were divided on this question. The few strong responses thought about the different groups/individuals that bias the media such as the government and showed how they inflict bias e.g. through censorship. The majority of weaker responses described examples such as individual moral panics without linking them to the question.

Examiner Hint: Candidates should understand the different command words, for example the difference between “ways” and “how”.

Q3c. This question asked candidates to evaluate whether the media only exists to entertain. The best answers focussed both on examples of media for entertainment, evaluating them with other functions such as to inform. Weak answers were based on assertion and limited debate without substantiation beyond the entertainment value of Big Brother.

Examiner Hint: Candidates need to ensure that they revise work with an evaluative approach, always considering opposition.

Q4a. This question asked who influences the content of the media. While many candidates could cite relevant ideas such as the audience, weaker candidates did not understand the question and gave answers such as newspapers.

Examiner hint: Candidates need to practise interpretation of questions through the use of past papers.

Q4b. Again responses showed that candidates do not always focus on the actual question. They were asked to discuss **how** the media stereotypes men. Most candidates did not go beyond examples of stereotypes forgetting to use sociological language.

Examiner hint: Candidates need to revise relevant concepts.

Q4c. Candidates really engaged well with this question. Many used contemporary examples well and discussed issues such as copycat murders. The best responses discussed good sociological studies such as hypodermic syringe models (although this was not always spelt correctly).

Examiner Hint: Candidates need to ensure they revise work evaluatively, always considering opposition.

Q5 and Q6: Poverty

Those that attempted this section largely had sociological knowledge in their answers, although it was marginally better on question 6.

Q5a. Candidates were able to describe two ways ethnicity affected chances of poverty. Many answers lost marks as they failed to identify and explain their ideas separately.

Examiner Hint: Candidates should rehearse identifying and then explaining ideas.

Q5b. Whilst all candidates could discuss how health was affected by poverty, few managed to include sociological evidence. However, a range of ideas were offered.

Examiner Hint: Candidates must revise key terms comprehensively and practise using them.

Q5c. Many candidates managed to discuss whether poverty was caused by laziness, but too many lacked the concepts needed. Best responses discussed the New Right idea that people take benefits and do not work, and opposed this with structural explanations such as discrimination due to disability, but too often responses were too narrow.

Examiner Hint: Candidates must remember to include as many sociological terms as possible.

Q6a. This question was well answered with most candidates able to cite different ways poverty can be reduced. However, some candidates lost marks due to repetitive ideas.

Examiner Hint: Candidates should practise identifying two examples of all key areas.

Q6b. Some candidates did well to discuss the different ways poverty can be measured. However, many continue to fail to know the difference between measurements and definitions.

Examiner Hint: Candidates need to ensure that they show understanding of measurements separately to definitions of poverty.

Q6c. This question asked for a discussion over whether the welfare state has solved poverty. Many gave confused responses showing a lack of understanding of what the welfare state is. However, a few managed to debate how far poverty had been solved through policy such as welfare benefits.

Examiner Hint: Candidates need to practise evaluation skills.

Q7 and Q8: Contemporary Social Changes

Contemporary Social Change remains the least popular in terms of responses and also seems to be the module the candidates are the least prepared for. This seemed to be answered by candidates who may have had knowledge from another discipline e.g. Science or Geography, which led to non-sociological responses which scored few marks. Responses to Q8 were better.

Q7a. This question was not answered by many. Responses failed to look at trends in technological development, merely focussing on examples of new technology.

Q7b. Few candidates answered the question correctly.

Q7c. The few candidates who attempted this question answered with an assertive tone. Again answers lacked sociology.

Q8a. Responses often managed to discuss problems of rapid population growth, but were too repetitive.

Q8b. The candidates who answered this question offered some ideas such as better health care when discussing the increase in the numbers of elderly people.

Q8c. Candidates that answered this question did not really debate the issue sociologically and used just common sense in their answers.

1990/03 Paper 3

This year the compulsory topic in Section A dealt with Family and Identity. In 2010 the topic for Section A will deal with Power and Citizenship. The compulsory Section B question dealt with Power and Citizenship in 2009, whilst in 2010 it will focus on the topic of Family and Identity. The option units in Section C remain the same from year to year and this year, and again, Crime, Deviance and Social Control was by far the most popular option with only a minority of candidates choosing one of the other options – Religion or Protest and Social Movements. All centres and students should be congratulated for their hard work on the paper. A variety of responses were seen by the team, from the sociologically excellent to those that used simple commonsense. A minority of candidates perhaps should not have been entered for the Higher tier paper and consideration should be given to this decision. The majority of candidates, however, demonstrated good sociological knowledge and understanding and impressed the teams with their use of contemporary examples, particularly in terms of Power and Citizenship, and sociological concepts to support points made, this is something that should be strongly encouraged. For students to maximise their marks, however, it is crucial that they develop good examination skills and focus on the specific demands of the question set. Time seemed, on the whole, to be well used this session with fewer candidates not finishing the paper and fewer making rubric errors in Section C. Overall, the quality of sociological knowledge and understanding demonstrated by candidates and with the conceptual and, at times, theoretical engagement was impressive. A large number of candidates produced incredibly detailed and accurate responses, excellent to see.

Comments on Individual Questions

Section A

Q1a The vast majority of candidates were able to use the source to correctly pick out the two relevant answers.

Examiner Hint:

Regular practice at these types of data analysis questions in class beforehand can maximise success.

Q1b Candidates generally showed good knowledge and understanding of a variety of reasons as to why the evidence in the source might not be accurate. Typically candidates commented on the fact that the results were adapted, were completed by a student and the fact that the chosen research method was observation – Hawthorne effect etc. Candidates had improved from last session in terms of linking their responses explicitly to accuracy and thus many scored very highly indeed here.

Examiner Hint:

Candidates should have three distinct points in their response – encourage students to number these for clarity.

Q1c A range of answers were seen here. Many candidates did not get any further than comments/descriptions of findings with little assessment of the degree of support between the sources. What differentiated candidates here was firstly the range of points made – candidates should be encouraged to make three clear points and, secondly, whether or not they explicitly discussed the degree of support for each. Many candidates simply described one point in great detail and hence did not score highly. Most common points looked at findings, year, sources, methods and samples.

Examiner Hint:

Regular practice is needed of comparing sources and consideration of factors other than just the research findings.

Q1d This question is best approached as a question about representativeness and generaliseability and therefore candidates should be encouraged to look at three clear reasons why the information in the source might **not** be useful – in this particular case as evidence of the experience of **all** children. Sample size, composition and location would seem the most easily accessible areas to focus on in this particular question. When candidates focused on the key word, all, in the question, good, sociological responses were seen that scored highly with many candidates scoring full marks.

Examiner Hint:

Ensure that students are well versed in issues of generaliseability and representativeness and can apply these to specific issues in a source. Use of past questions should prove helpful here.

Q1e Most candidates were able to describe a range of sociological methods and were rewarded at a low level for this. Increasing numbers from last year also described sociological evidence which improved the marks they were awarded. It was also felt that this session there were fewer generic methods answers seen with a much better use of context. This is not a general question about methods and hence candidates who answered in this way did not score highly in AO2. Better candidates described, justified and explained the methods they would use to investigate whether/how families teach children their gender roles. They referred to both primary methods and secondary evidence and focused on the specific context of the claim. This must be done if candidates are going to score in Level 3. Only a minority of candidates ignored the methodological focus of the question and wrote an essay on gender role socialisation which could not be credited.

Examiner Hint:

Candidates are advised to select the methods that best fit the research topic's aims, ensuring that they use both primary and secondary evidence to do so.

Overall, question one was answered very well, suggesting good exam technique preparation for the topic of research methods. Methodological concepts were usefully employed by many candidates to help them answer the questions set. Students that did not perform so well typically answered in a generic, descriptive manner or failed to focus on the specific demands of the question set.

Section B

Q2a This question on factors that affect voting behaviour was typically well answered and saw many candidates scoring full marks, which was really good to see. Candidates were well prepared here.

Examiner Hint:

Students must focus on the specific demands of the question set in order to score highly.

Q2b Answers for this question were more mixed. Some excellent responses were seen directly comparing democracies and dictatorships with relevant examples which were duly rewarded. There really were some very topical and contemporary evidence used here (i.e. Zimbabwe) alongside the more predictable examples (i.e. UK and Nazi Germany). At times really in depth, detailed and high order responses were seen. Some good students failed to use any examples to substantiate their points which held their marks in Level 2 and at times weaker candidates simply described generally what was meant by a democracy and a dictatorship.

Examiner Hint:

Candidates should focus on explaining three distinct points that directly address the question in order to maximise their marks. All elements of the specification must be covered during the course.

Q2c On the whole, very mixed responses were produced for this question, with some candidates demonstrating wide ranging and accurate sociological knowledge and understanding across a wide range of topic areas. Others, however, either talked very generically or limited themselves to one area of social life (i.e. politics) or relied on historical information about voting, which limited their marks. The use of contemporary examples and evidence to substantiate points made was really good. Common areas of discussion were politics, legislation, the workplace, family life and changing norms and values of males and females. Some candidates, however, wasted time writing about what the power differences between men and women were like in the past. Some students are still producing one sided responses.

Examiner Hint:

Many students did look at arguments both for and against the claim but the team did still see many one sided responses. Candidates need to recognise that this is an evaluation question and structure their responses appropriately.

Overall, this question produced a wide range of responses and was a good differentiator between those discussing sociology and those simply talking generally and with little accurate knowledge. It was really encouraging to see the level of engagement with this topic area this year, a big improvement from 2007.

Section C

As stated earlier, the overwhelming majority of candidates answered either question three or four. A minority did not score as well as they could have in this section as they either did not follow the rubric (i.e. answered too many Section C questions) or answered a question that they had not prepared for in class. Candidates must understand the rubric of the exam, particularly as it applies to this section.

Q3a This question was answered very well indeed by the majority of candidates and many scored full marks.

Examiner Hint:

Students need to ensure that they differentiate their three points clearly, numbering may help here.

Q3b This question was not well answered on the whole and many students seemed ill prepared for discussing sociological ways of measuring crime, instead giving very vague answers such as 'asking the public', 'listen to 999 calls' and 'checking CCTV footage'. Statistics, Victim Surveys (BCS and/or local) and Self Report Studies are all clearly identified in the specification and textbooks and candidates are expected to know about them and be able to discuss their usage.

Examiner Hint:

Students must be familiar with all aspects of the specification in order to be able to access all the questions set.

Q3c Some good responses were seen here with candidates seemingly well prepared to evaluate the claim. Several engaged with ideas of financial need, lack of opportunities, poor education, differential socialisation, peer pressure and boredom/thrills when answering. A number also engaged in a very theoretical/conceptual way with Marxism, status frustration, subcultural theory etc which was excellent to see. Clearly they were well rewarded for this. A

number of one sided answers were still seen and candidates need to be reminded to address both the 'for' and 'against' arguments.

Examiner Hint:

Arguments do not need to be balanced but there does need to be evidence of a debate in all Section B and C part c questions.

Q4a This question was answered well by most candidates with only a minority referring to formal agencies. Some candidates, however, clearly did not know the meaning of a social agency.

Examiner Hint:

Regular practice of these part a questions with teacher feedback should help candidates focus better on what they are being asked about in specific questions.

Q4b Some very good answers were seen for this question. Most candidates had clear (and in some cases quite extreme) ideas of possible solutions to crime. The better candidates focused not only on punishment but on socialisation and the use of informal agencies as well and scored highly for this. A significant number of students produced a rather list like answer focusing solely on punishments here which did not typically demonstrate the required range of knowledge.

Examiner Hint:

Candidates should ensure that they look at a range of different and relevant points in their answer.

Q4c This question was tackled very well on the whole, although many candidates did tend to concentrate on the gender aspect of the question to the detriment of age. The more able candidates considered both factors well. A minority of candidates seemed to ignore the question's reference to both gender and age and instead simply talked generically about irrelevant reasons why people might commit crime – lack of money, racism etc. The better candidates really impressed the team with their knowledge and application of such theories and concepts as chivalry factor, white collar crime, peer pressure, status frustration, anomie, girl gangs etc.

Examiner Hint:

Candidates should be reminded that a range of sociological (rather than personal) evidence and ideas needs to be the focus for their answers in order to score highly and that they must focus on the specific demands of the question set.

Q5a This was not a popular question with very few candidates attempting it. Those that did answer this question typically produced good answers, showing clear knowledge of different protest groups.

Examiner Hint:

Remind students to both identify and describe in all Section B and C part a questions.

Q5b As above. Success here seemed to depend on whether the candidate had prepared for this topic or was simply 'having a go'. Those who were prepared made some good points and used examples to demonstrate ways a group can protest without breaking the law. Other candidates, however, produced very limited responses here writing a generic, list like and commonsense description. The lack of sociological knowledge and understanding in such answers meant they did not score well.

Examiner Hint:

Candidates should be reminded which of the options they should be answering in Section C – perhaps getting them to score a line through questions that don't apply to them at the beginning of the examination might prove helpful.

Q5c Typically answers here were generalised and did not show specific sociological arguments or examples of protest groups. Some candidates who had prepared for the topic, however, engaged well with the question and used topical examples to help support their points. Without case study examples candidates will not score in Level 3. Most did produce arguments both 'for' and 'against' but again a significant number did not enter into the debate.

Examiner Hint:

Candidates must check that they answer the correct option topic and that they are formulating a debate in their response. Discussion and 'argument' in the classroom is often particularly useful for developing their evaluation skills.

Q6a The same trends seen in question 5 were again evident throughout this question, however less candidates answered question six than question five. Often reasons were very generalised and again the feeling was that a lot of candidates who answered this question were not specifically prepared for it.

Examiner Hint:

See 5a.

Q6b Answers here were typified by very general points that contained little sociological knowledge and understanding and it was clear that a number of candidates choosing this question to were not prepared for it. Most answers seen were very descriptive and contained little evidence. The best responses used case study material, for example 'Fathers for Justice' and Greenpeace, to exemplify points made and had a number of distinct ideas to discuss how social movements can become successful in society.

Examiner Hint:

Candidates should have knowledge of different social movements – what they do, how and why- and clear definitions of these for revision.

Q6c Comments as above for 6b. The best candidates explored ideas of fairness and equality in terms of giving people a voice, changing society and allowing for alternatives to the norm. Again case study materials and examples typified responses from better candidates. Many candidates, however, had little knowledge of how social movements might make society a better place to live and thus produced only limited responses with no examples.

Examiner Hint:

Explicit examples/case studies are expected in order for candidates to score in Level 3.

Q7a This was not a popular question and seemed to be answered too frequently by candidates who were not specifically prepared to answer on 'Religion' in the exam, the odd candidate from a centre where all other candidates answered on a different option topic, for example. Most candidates who answered the question were able to identify two ways the UK is less religious today than in the past but descriptions to support points varied enormously in quality. Most popular responses tended to involve declining church attendance, decrease in the marriage rate, increase in the divorce rate and the declining influence of religion in society. From centres that had studied religion as a topic, some answers seen were good.

Examiner Hint:

Students must be able to both identify and describe their selected points in order to score well.

Q7b This was not a popular question and seemed to be answered too frequently by candidates who were not specifically prepared to answer on 'Religion' in the exam, the odd candidate from a centre where all other candidates answered on a different option topic. Many answers revolved around commonsense notions and generalised points that did not use any case study material.

Examiner Hint:

Some candidates debated the issue which did not get them any extra marks as question b should be a one sided response using a range of different ideas, examples and evidence.

Q7c This was not a popular question and seemed to be answered frequently by candidates who were not specifically prepared to answer on 'Religion' in the exam, the odd candidate from a centre where all other candidates answered on a different option topic. Several candidates, however, talked well about the way religion was a norm of the past and thus expected of people. Better candidates also differentiated between different social characteristics and religions and thus recognised that how religious a person is is actually difficult to measure.

Examiner Hint:

Ensure that candidates are answering on the correct option topic and that they are formulating a debate in their part c response.

Q8a Very few candidates answered this question, even less than for question 7. Some good answers here from those who were prepared but unfortunately the same trend as in Q7 occurred with some candidates answering on this topic despite not having explicitly prepared for it. A minority of candidates did well to consider multiculturalism and diversity here but overall this question was not answered well.

Examiner Hint:

In describing the three reasons candidates should ensure that they are all discrete and that they are not simply rewording and repeating what has already been said. Points must be discrete.

Q8b As above in Q7, the differentiator here seemed to be whether or not the candidate was specifically prepared to answer on this topic. Where this was not the case, answers were generalised and showed little or no sociological understanding, often not engaging with the concept of gender at all. In other cases, some relevant examples were given to explain how gender can affect religious experience and behaviour, focusing on case study material and specific religions. When this was done good responses were seen.

Examiner Hint:

Candidates should ensure they have sufficient range and depth in their response (3 good, discrete points) in order to access Level 3 marks. These must also be substantiated by well chosen examples.

Q8c As above. Where they were prepared, candidates often engaged well with the question and were able to give relevant points as to whether religion in the UK is in decline. Some good sociology was seen here that utilised contemporary examples well. However, there were a significant number of candidates who produced a simplistic/commonsense response that prevented them from scoring highly. A few candidates ignored the 'UK' in the question and thus talked very generally indeed.

Examiner Hint:

Encourage candidates to exemplify points they make with contemporary examples as well as those more traditional ones found in the textbooks.

Report on the Components taken in June 2009

Overall, candidates should be reminded that in order to score well their answers need to be sociological. Therefore they should not choose an option question which they have not prepared in class. Candidates find it extremely difficult to score highly in Section C if they just 'have a go' at what looks like an interesting or easier question!

1990/04 Paper 4

General Comments

This year, the compulsory topic in Section A dealt with the module of Work and Employment. In 2010, Section A will deal with Education. The compulsory Section B dealt with the module Education in 2009, whilst in 2010 it will focus on the module of Work and Employment. The option units in Section C remain the same from year to year and again Poverty was popular, as was Mass Media, with only a minority of candidates choosing Contemporary Social Change.

In 2009, Paper 4 appears to have differentiated successfully. There remains a divide between candidates who rely on common sense for their answers, possibly having been entered for the wrong tier; and those who have revised and used sociological evidence, relevant contemporary examples and terminology. There was an improvement in the standard of achievement for some candidates, especially in reference to Section A question e. However, some candidates still lack knowledge in certain areas of the syllabus.

It was pleasing to see that the majority of candidates answered the correct amount of questions with less candidates attempting all questions. Some candidates do still run out of time, but not many. It appears that candidates are writing too much for answers to Section A 1e and Section B and C part a's. For further advice please see the comments on individual questions.

Comments on Individual Questions

Section A

Generally candidates were well prepared for Section A. However, some candidates still provided generic responses of validity, reliability and representativeness in every answer. Candidates need to be able to recognise which research issue is being discussed in each question.

Q1a. From the evidence in source A some students failed to gain 2 marks either not reading the words "working women" or not including statistics in their answer. The marks given are for showing ability to analyse data and thus candidates need to practice reading data (both quantitative and qualitative) and showing understanding.

Q1b. Candidates were divided by the responses to this question. Some candidates did not focus on accuracy (validity) and thus they did not score highly. In fact, many candidates wrote completely about sampling and representativeness.

Examiner Hint: Candidates need to revise the disadvantages of using methods.

Q1c. It was pleasing to see that candidates were prepared for this question this year. However, weaker candidates copied from the items without explicit reference to support or non-support of the items or even compared the wrong sources. Some candidates did not refer to the content of the sources at all, describing the different methods used. Strong responses looked at areas of similarity and areas of difference, with some overall conclusion of support. More candidates this year discussed the validity/ reliability or representativeness of the sources. In some cases this was well done, but many got confused (especially over whether the data in each were quantitative or qualitative) and made the task more complicated.

Examiner Hint: Candidates must practise this format of question.

Q1d. Candidates answered well on this question and knew to look for issues of representativeness. However, a minority are still looking at generic issues of validity. Candidates need to be able to relate problems in representativeness to the aim of the research. Often responses were merely repetitive e.g. the observations only took place on Wednesdays, so they are only true of Wednesdays. This did not receive A02 marks as it did not look at the aim or the effect on the aim of the lack of representativeness. Better answers considered shift work in supermarkets and whether the same staff continually work the same shifts, thus causing an issue with representativeness.

Examiner Hint: Candidates need to practise considering issues of representativeness and their impact on different aims.

Q1e. Candidates seemed really well prepared for the requirements of this question however; there were many partly generic and rehearsed responses. Candidates had knowledge of questionnaires, interviews and observation and some discussed issues that are beyond GCSE level e.g. quantitative and qualitative methods. However, some candidates did not always understand the terms correctly. These candidates did not use any secondary evidence, thus preventing them from gaining AO1 marks above 3, despite the question asking for methods **and evidence**. Best responses considered evidence, such as government statistics on tribunals of cases of racial discrimination.

Examiner Hint: Candidates should rehearse matching methods to aims.

Section B

Q2a. This question yielded mixed responses. Many candidates found the task manageable clearly revising their knowledge of the different types of schools as clearly laid out in the specification. However, others did not score marks either over confusion over what the word alternative meant, or not focussing on the current system of education e.g. referring to tripartite schooling or failure to understand what public/ state schools were. Others wrote too much which then meant they ran out of time (refer to the mark scheme and use the idea of a mark a minute).

Examiner Hint: Candidates need to practise the necessary format of identified answer and then description. Candidates also need to revise their key concepts as stated in the specification.

Q2b. Most candidates engaged with this question well. There was a difference between candidates who had revised sociological ideas and those who had not considered how gender roles were taught in schools. Best responses discussed hidden curriculum; formal curriculum; labelling and sanctions. There were less underdeveloped answers this year, which was pleasing to see, however, a small number of candidates did not read the question and ignored gender altogether.

Examiner Hint: Candidates need to revise concepts in preparation of all areas of socialisation.

Q2c. Candidates all engaged with the statement, however not all had enough sociological knowledge to score highly when discussing it. Those who scored highly considered the importance of exams and qualifications in reference to league tables and OFSTED and discussed other functions of schools, such as the economic role, socialisation and social control. These candidates showed an impressive level of knowledge and understanding. Weaker candidates did not offer more than one idea for and one against, often relying on assertion only.

Examiner Hint: Candidates need to ensure that they revise work with an evaluative approach, always considering opposition.

Section C

Q3 and Q4: The Mass Media

This was a more popular module again this year. Candidates must have the terminology and knowledge to discuss their answers. Due to the constant change in media technology candidates need to have access to recent sociological text on this subject.

Question 3

This was the less popular media choice, and less successfully answered.

Q3a. Candidates should not have ignored the term “recent”. Weaker candidates did not score with answers such as TV and radio. Strong responses discussed digital technology/ interactivity / convergence.

Examiner Hint: Candidates need access to contemporary evidence/studies.

Q3b. Candidates again were divided on this question. Strong responses considered the different groups/individuals that bias the media such as the government and showed how they inflict bias e.g. through censorship. Weaker responses described moral panics without linking them to the question.

Examiner Hint: Candidates should understand the different command words, for example the difference between “ways” and “how”.

Q3c. This question asked candidates to evaluate whether the media only exists to entertain. The best answers focussed both on examples of media for entertainment, evaluating them with other functions such as to inform. A few even managed to discuss theory such as pluralism. Weak answers were based on assertion and limited debate. Moreover, some candidates did not include a conclusion.

Examiner Hint: Candidates need to ensure they revise work with an evaluative approach, always considering opposition.

Q4a. This question asked who influences the content of the media. While many could cite relevant ideas such as the audience, weaker candidates did not understand the question and gave answers such as newspapers.

Examiner hint: Candidates need to practise interpretation of questions through the use of past papers.

Q4b. Again responses showed that candidates do not always focus on the actual question. They were asked to discuss **how** the media stereotypes men. Very few candidates went beyond examples of stereotypes forgetting to use sociological language. Answers needed to focus on the tools of stereotyping e.g. invisibility and repetition as well as the examples.

Examiner hint: Candidates need to revise relevant concepts.

Q4c. Candidates engaged well with this question. Many candidates used contemporary examples successfully and discussed issues such as copycat murders. The best responses discussed good sociological studies and theory such as hypodermic syringe models.

Examiner Hint: Candidates need to ensure they revise work evaluatively, always considering opposition.

Q5 and Q6: Poverty

Candidates who attempted this section demonstrated some sociological knowledge in their answers, although it was marginally better on question 6.

Q5a. Candidates were able to identify and describe three ways ethnicity affected chances of poverty. A few responses lost marks as they did not identify and explain their ideas separately.

Examiner Hint: Candidates should rehearse identifying and then explaining ideas.

Q5b. Whilst all candidates could discuss how health was affected by poverty, few managed to include sociological evidence. Good candidates used concepts such as absolute and relative poverty to look at the diverse effects on health.

Examiner Hint: Candidates must revise key terms comprehensively and practise using them.

Q5c. Many candidates managed to discuss whether poverty was caused by laziness, but many lacked the concepts needed to gain full marks. Best responses referred to the New Right and cultural explanations and evaluated them with structural explanations such as discrimination.

Examiner Hint: Candidates must remember to include as many sociological terms as possible.

Q6a. This question was well answered with most candidates able to cite three different ways how poverty can be reduced. However, some candidates lost marks due to repetitive ideas.

Examiner Hint: Candidates should practise identifying three examples of all key areas.

Q6b. Some candidates did well to discuss the different ways poverty can be measured. They discussed absolute measures as well as relative such as benefit levels. However, some candidates did not know the difference between measurements and definitions.

Examiner Hint: Candidates need to ensure understanding of measurements separately to definitions of poverty.

Q6c. This question asked for a discussion over whether the welfare state has solved poverty. Lots of responses showed a good level of knowledge on the history of the welfare state, and thus could debate whether it had eradicated the 5 evils.

Examiner Hint: Candidates need to practise evaluation skills.

Q7 and Q8: Contemporary Social Changes

Contemporary Social Change remains the least popular in terms of responses and also seems to be the module the candidates are the least prepared for. This seemed to be answered by candidates who may have had knowledge from another discipline e.g. Science or Geography, which resulted in non-sociological responses that scored few marks. Responses to Q8 were better.

Q7a. This question was not answered by many candidates. Responses did not look at trends in technological development, merely focussing on examples of new technology.

Q7b. Few candidates answered the actual question.

Q7c. The few candidates that tried this question answered with an assertive tone. Again answers lacked sociological knowledge.

Report on the Components taken in June 2009

Q8a. Responses often discussed the problems of rapid population growth, but some were repetitive.

Q8b. Those who answered this question managed to offer some ideas such as better health care when discussing the increase in numbers of elderly people.

Q8c. Candidates who answered this question did not really debate the issue sociologically and just used common sense in their answers.

1990/05 Paper 5

General comments

Again, the work overall this year was of a high standard. At the top end there were some enquiries of exceptional quality; beyond the requirements for study at this level and demonstrating innovation and originality. Many candidates were able to provide convincing evidence of their enthusiasm for the subject matter, sound reasons for their motives for the focus of their research and a real depth of understanding.

In general, the studies demonstrated good, systematic organisation and conformed to the structure proposed in the guidelines, indicating good direction from teachers. However, there are some instances where data has been provided by teachers. Over-direction should be avoided as candidates can then simply follow instructions with little understanding.

Some candidates continue to produce lengthy enquiries, exceeding the advised 2000 word limit. At one extreme these overlong pieces, when exceptional, occupy too much of the candidate's time given the 20% contribution to the overall grade of this unit. Overly long pieces often consist of large amounts of media material which has no relevance, comment or analysis. The best studies are those which are compact and economical through clarity of focus and with an internal structure and dynamic of their own.

Administration

The administration by the majority of centres was good. Some MS1 forms are difficult to read and zero marks are recorded when A for absence is required. A number of centres did not send the MS1 forms by the deadline of 15th May which is a set date each year and in a few cases this was weeks rather than days late.

A few centres substituted individual studies when the ones requested had been misplaced and centres must be aware that **all** candidate's work must be made available for moderation.

Please ensure that candidates' work is attached together, and labelled clearly with the candidate's name, number and centre number and with the CAF included with the individual's work rather than as a separate set. Errors with the CAF were also apparent; it is appreciated if totalling of the individual AO marks could be checked and when amend forms are sent, that staff complete and return these promptly.

Centres should make sure that they send the CCS160 (centre authentication form) as this is a condition of the candidates gaining an award.

There are many outstanding centres with efficient and well organised staff who follow the instructions given by OCR and this is much appreciated by the moderators.

Marking

Overall, centre staff showed good understanding of the AOs. Where appropriate, teachers were prepared to allocate 0 marks, suggesting they were comfortable in allocating the full range of marks. Many made effective use of the CAF comment boxes using the terminology of the discriminators for the AOs. It was particularly helpful when this was combined with annotation on the work itself of where the individual AOs had been realised as a clear understanding of the marking rationale was provided. However, some centres left the comment boxes blank or added minimal or unfocused comments such as, 'exceptional work for a sixteen year old'.

Most centres marked accurately and consistently, with any difference in moderation being within the tolerance allowed. In the minority of centres which had adjustments recommended, it was mostly in a downward direction. Where there was evidence of over-marking, this often tended to occur in AOs 1:1 and 1:2 where candidates failed to look beyond internet data or their class texts, and in some cases their own limited and subjective experiences. There were a very small number of centres which had a significant change to marks and they are advised to seek support from OCR.

Comments on the work moderated

Topics, Approach, Aims and Hypotheses

There were some original and very interesting research pieces. Many centres seem to allow candidates 'free-rein' in topic selection and subsequent enthusiasm and motivation were apparent. Teachers in the centres encouraging this are to be congratulated. In the few centres which prescribe the title of the studies and over-direct the sources and methods, the work produced tended to be poor in quality.

There was evidence of traditional topics being studied and some centres encouraged an instrumental approach by encouraging their candidates to study one of the two topics examined in Sections A of the exam papers continued. The recent trend of a large number of candidates studying the size zero issue also continued and as in previous years and unfortunately had a lack of sociological focus and an excessive use of large amounts of tabloid based celebrity coverage without analysis. Teachers are advised to encourage candidates studying any aspect of possible media influence to consider inclusion of basic theories of media effect.

Overall there was a fairly wide range of topics studied with most being well contextualised sociologically. However, there were some candidates who at best took current affairs issues and at worst a simplistic reference to moral panics as their area of focus with little attempt to render these sociological.

It was clear that the most successful candidates commenced their study with a set of clearly identified and manageable aims which informed their studies and to which they referred throughout the enquiry. Some candidates produced vague or over-wide and unmanageable aims.

There was some evidence that candidates were making ethical considerations in their research but this was limited overall. There were several examples where interviewees were named and a few studies in which inappropriate questioning of vulnerable respondents was conducted.

Methods and Sources

Many candidates showed a good understanding of the topic through a range of appropriate secondary sources. Whilst few centres allow candidates to include a mass of downloaded or copied material, it is still being done by the weaker candidates. It is advised that candidates look more widely than just their class text.

Questionnaires were used widely to acquire primary data though there were examples of some other innovative methods such as content analysis, interviews and observations. As in previous years, candidates preferred using methods which gained quantitative data, indicating a reluctance to use qualitative methods and difficulty in analysing the data from these and using it to draw conclusions. However, there were candidates who used interviews with proficiency and were able to synthesise the results with data produced from other primary methods and their secondary sources.

Attention to sampling was generally in evidence but in varying degrees of depth and sophistication, which could be improved.

Many candidates aimed to compare the behaviour of two groups; a format which can work well. However, these candidates need to be guided to produce results which allow comparison, rather than analysis of the whole sample which cannot then prove or disprove the hypothesis.

Whichever sources and methods are chosen, candidates should justify the selection in term of their aims. Whilst some did this very well and gained high marks for AO1:2, many candidates were limited to half of the marks available through a standard answer listing advantages and disadvantages with little reference to the nature or aims of the study.

Using Evidence

Explanation of data (AO2:2a) was done very well with regard to primary findings but less well for secondary sources.

The candidates (at all levels) with clear and realistic aims were the most successful in being able to use the evidence from primary and secondary data to reach conclusions (AO2:3b). This tended to be most straightforward where there was a hypothesis to test.

Evaluation continues to be one of the most challenging areas of the coursework with many candidates listing the good and bad aspects of their research in a simplistic way and identification of future changes limited to increasing their sample size. There are some exceptional candidates whose analytical skills are impressive and they explored the problems with their research in some depth. There were very few candidates, even at the lower end, who made no attempt to evaluate and this is a positive sign. Generally candidates were able to identify strengths and weaknesses with their methodology (AO 2:1b) but few and mainly the more able candidates were able to evaluate their secondary and primary data (AO 2:2b).

Overall

Overall, the candidates' work continues to be of a high quality. Conducting research is a challenging task for candidates at this level and good knowledge of the requirements is important. Many teachers have worked hard to encourage their candidates to utilise their skills to reach their potential. This is commendable.

The value of the coursework in applying the research methods inspires a spirit of critical enquiry into the minds of those for whom sociology is still a relatively new subject. It also encourages an understanding of sociology as a discipline based on evidence rather than guesswork or common sense.

Grade Thresholds

General Certificate of Secondary Education
Sociology (1990)
June 2009 Examination Series

Component Threshold Marks

Component	Max Mark	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
01	80	n/a	n/a	48	39	30	22	14
02	80	n/a	n/a	52	43	34	25	16
03	80	58	49	40	31	n/a	n/a	n/a
04	80	62	52	42	33	n/a	n/a	n/a
05	40	32	27	23	18	13	9	5

Specification Options

Foundation Tier

	Max Mark	A*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
Overall Threshold Marks	200	n/a	n/a	n/a	119	99	77	56	35
Percentage in Grade	200	n/a	n/a	n/a	20.3	23.5	27.5	18.2	8
Cumulative Percentage in Grade	200	n/a	n/a	n/a	20.3	43.8	71.3	89.5	97.5

The total entry for the examination was 1259

Higher Tier

	Max Mark	A*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
Overall Threshold Marks	200	169	148	127	105	82	70	n/a	n/a
Percentage in Grade	200	5.2	20.4	27.9	26.6	14.6	3.1	n/a	n/a
Cumulative Percentage in Grade	200	5.2	25.6	53.5	80.1	94.7	97.8	n/a	n/a

The total entry for the examination was 2848

Overall

	A*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
Percentage in Grade	3.7	14.3	19.7	24.8	17.2	10.2	5.4	2.4
Cumulative Percentage in Grade	3.7	18.0	37.7	62.5	79.7	89.9	95.3	97.7

The total entry for the examination was 4107

Statistics are correct at the time of publication.

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