



GCE EXAMINERS' REPORTS

**GCE (NEW)
SOCIOLOGY
AS/Advanced**

SUMMER 2018

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Annual Statistical Report

The annual Statistical Report (issued in the second half of the Autumn Term) gives overall outcomes of all examinations administered by WJEC.

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SOCIOLOGY

General Certificate of Education (New)

Summer 2018

Advanced Subsidiary/Advanced

Unit 1: Acquiring Culture

General Comments

The examining team was, on the whole, satisfied with the standards achieved in this series of examinations. Indeed, standards achieved by some candidates were exceptional and teachers and centres should be congratulated on the quality achieved.

The majority of candidates were able to demonstrate some knowledge and understanding of the topics covered. The very best answers demonstrated the higher order skills of analysis and evaluation most effectively.

There were however some very brief responses to essay questions and where this was the case it had a significant impact on the total mark for the paper.

When constructing discussions the best candidates made good use of empirical evidence and contemporary debates. Many essays were well structured, logical and focussed.

Examiners reported that only a few centres appeared to have requested candidates to complete the grid on the front of the answer booklet to show which questions had been answered (and in what order). It would be helpful if candidates could be reminded to do this. Many candidates did not label their answers clearly inside the booklet or label them correctly. It would be helpful if candidates were reminded of the importance of doing this accurately

Overall, candidates appeared to demonstrate appropriate time allocation to each section of the paper. There were a minority of cases where not enough time had been devoted to the last essay question.

There was a great deal of quite dated sociology cited, for example, discussing 1950s evidence as if it were current. This was often presented in the 'x' disagrees with 'y' fashion when 'x' came decades before 'y'. An awareness of the chronology of theory/evidence, and thus of social change, would benefit candidates for AO2 and AO3.

Centres are advised to remind candidates to take careful note of command words so that they respond appropriately in their answers. Where an assessment is required, the answer should not be descriptive in tone. The level of English and, where appropriate, Welsh was good.

Question 1

Section (a)

Most candidates were able to demonstrate some knowledge of the meaning of agents of socialisation. A significant number however were unsure and offered very generalised definitions with many relying heavily on the item for their answer. As a result, a significant number of candidates failed to score full marks for this question. It is worth noting that it is not possible to score full marks for this question without an accurate definition of the term.

Section (b)

Centres are advised to take careful note of this report and of previous reports to ensure that candidates understand the requirements of this question.

There were many very accomplished responses to this question that demonstrated sound knowledge and understanding of the process of socialisation and the ways that norms and values are passed on. However yet again, examiners reported that a number of candidates wrote in very general terms about what socialisation is rather than how it happens.

Examiners reported that a number of candidates were unclear about the meaning of the term agents of socialisation and this, unsurprisingly, had a negative impact on their answers. Candidates did not always use the item effectively to illustrate their answer and some made no reference to it at all. This meant that they were unable to access the very top marks for AO2. In questions with a specific instruction to use the item, candidates who did not do so will inevitably fall short of full marks.

Question 2: Families and Households and Youth Culture

Compulsory questions

- Q2. (a) (i)** This was a case of candidates knowing or not knowing this term. Many scored full marks but some mixed the term with double or dual burden and some did not know that the third “shift” was in fact emotion work.
- Q3. (a) (i)** Again, many candidates were able to score full marks but some failed to give a simple definition and so could not be awarded full marks.

Essays

Family and Households

- Q2. (b)** This question was answered well by some candidates but once again there were a significant number of weak answers where it was evident that candidates did not understand the focus of the task. Answers that merely wrote descriptive accounts of theories of family, even if they were feminist theories, did not score highly in AO2 or AO3. Centres should be advised that a significant number of candidates were unable to construct effective discussions. There was often a distinct lack of evidence to support or reject ideas and as a result candidates failed to secure high level marks for AO2 or AO3. A number of candidates seemed to struggle with high level analysis and evaluation and centres should be aware of the importance of these skills. Descriptive accounts of opposing theories do not allow candidates to achieve high marks for AO3 as this constitutes juxtaposition and results in a low band 3 AO3 mark. A significant number of candidates presented essays that were almost entirely one sided, arguing for feminist theories of family rather than evaluating them as the command words required.
- Q2. (c)** This essay required candidates to examine how diversity has affected family relationships. Some candidates did this very well whilst others gave lengthy accounts of the reasons for diversity, ignoring how relationships may have been affected. As a result there were some very good and very weak answers to this question.

Youth Culture

- Q3. (b)** There were some very good responses to this question and many candidates were very highly rewarded for their precise and detailed knowledge and understanding. However, there was also a significant number of candidates who demonstrated very tentative knowledge and even less understanding and as a result they were appropriately rewarded. The best essays here examined the pros and cons of post-modern views of youth culture rather than merely describing them. They then attempted to make a judgement on the value of these ideas and as such were able to access the higher mark bands for AO3
- Q3. (c)** Candidates either presented a well-supported well-informed discussion or merely described why young people join youth cultures which sometimes, by chance, included some reference to deviance. Candidates must be aware that to score highly they must be selective in the knowledge they utilise so that it is relevant to the discussion.

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Unit 2: Understanding Society and Methods of Sociological Enquiry

General Comments

The majority of candidates responded well to this paper having been effectively prepared by their centres. Teachers and candidates should be congratulated on the quality of work produced.

Candidates were generally able to demonstrate some knowledge and understanding across the range of questions. In the very best answers, candidates were confident in manipulating previously unseen data – both prose and numerical; when constructing discussions these candidates made good use of empirical evidence and contemporary debates and examples, in addition to demonstrating proficiency in all three skills areas in essays: AO1, AO2 and AO3.

This year it was pleasing to note that centres have emphasised the importance of effective time management, with fewer candidates being hindered by poor time management affecting the final essay question which attracts 30 marks.

Candidates should continue to be encouraged to engage in sustained rather than juxtaposed evaluation in the 20 and 30 mark essay questions.

There were very few rubric errors. The level of English and, where appropriate, Welsh was good.

SECTION A

Question 1 - Compulsory

- Q1. (a)** Many candidates had some understanding of the term validity, although a significant minority confused validity and reliability. It might be helpful if candidates were advised to avoid using the concepts validity and reliability in the same sentence. The stronger candidates defined validity in detail and provided two or three knowledge points to support their understanding. While the majority of candidates used the item, a significant number were not able to use the item to explain a point about validity and this precluded them from achieving full marks. Some candidates copied rather than used the item to address the question. An alternative approach to securing full AO2 marks is to refer to the item and include a reference to another appropriate study.

- Q1. (b)** The majority were able to identify at least one reason why sociologists choose to use in-depth interviews in social research and there were many pleasing responses. Candidates who achieved the highest marks clearly structured their answers into two separate reasons. However, a significant minority provided two very similar reasons with overlapping content. Some candidates did not refer to, or made very brief references to the item resulting in lower marks; also some lacked a clear understanding of key concepts. Stronger candidates made clear references to the item in addition to examples/sociological studies. Centres are advised to remind candidates that the skill area AO3 is not being assessed in this question. Candidates who supported their knowledge with clear examples were more likely to achieve the highest AO2 marks.
- Q1. (c)** The majority of answers showed an understanding of participant observation, both overt and covert, although the answers varied significantly in breadth and depth. Many candidates were able to identify the weaknesses of participant observation effectively; however fewer were able to balance this with a detailed range of strengths. This was the most consistent reason for candidates missing out on the highest marks. There remains a tendency to juxtapose evaluative points. Stronger candidates referred to a range of studies that used participant observation; these studies were contextualised in relation to the question, with some candidates embedding the studies in discussions of strengths and weaknesses. Furthermore these candidates made effective use of the item. A significant minority of candidates confused validity and reliability. Some candidates assumed the concepts representativeness and generalisability are characteristics of the method rather than the sample.

SECTION B

Option 1 - Education [This remains the most popular option]

Compulsory question

- Q2. (a) (i)** Most candidates understood the data and gave good answers. Stronger answers referred to an overall difference between the two groups and then made accurate references to other trends. Weaker responses often described eligibility rather than the relationship between free school meals and educational achievement. There were missed opportunities to access the highest marks, for example to avoid mathematical errors; candidates need to refer to 'percentage point differences' between the statistics as the cohorts are dissimilar. A significant minority of candidates gave reasons for the trends, which was not required. Those who scored lower marks tended to quote the percentages for each ethnic group resulting in descriptive answers. It might be useful for candidates to begin by describe the pattern/trend, support with evidence from the table and then refer to any percentage point differences. In most cases points were supported with reference to the data.

- Q2. (a) (ii)** The majority of candidates provided two clear reasons for the relationship between free school meals and educational achievement. Strong answers referred to sociological reasons which were outlined, explained and supported with reference to writers or studies, for example Smith and Noble, Feinstejn, Bernstein, Bourdieu, Becker. Lower achieving candidates made little or no reference to studies. Some candidates did not differentiate between cultural and material deprivation. Candidates could draw on their knowledge and understanding required in the debates section of the specification to answer this question. As in question 1b, teachers should be advised that encouraging students to write in a clearly structured way usually enhances the clarity of their answers. There is no requirement to provide an opening paragraph describing trends, neither is there any requirement to evaluate. Lower achieving candidates often failed to make specific links to free school meals.
- Q2. (b)** This was the most popular essay question and required candidates to examine and make a judgement on whether education effectively prepares young people for the workplace. Higher scoring candidates were able to focus on 'effectiveness'. This was more likely to be achieved when candidates considered functionalist views first and then contrasted these with Marxists and other views. Those who scored the highest demonstrated higher order essay writing techniques with high level evaluative and analytical style. Unfortunately in many answers evaluation continues to be characterised by juxtaposition. The best answers adopted an evaluative tone throughout, utilising evidence and examples effectively to enable a judgement to be made about the accuracy of the view. There were accurate references to Durkheim, Parsons, Davis and Moore Bowles and Gintis, Gerwitz and Bourdieu. Stronger candidates considered Feminist and postmodern critiques in addition to New Right views, although an analysis of new vocationalism was rare.
- Q2. (c)** This question was generally well addressed, with a variety of responses. Many candidates had a breadth of knowledge about cultural differences, particularly in relation to class and ethnicity, but there was often a missed opportunity to evaluate the impact of the cultural factors. Cultural factors in relation to class were well supported with studies, both for cultural deprivation and cultural capital. Some candidates however confused cultural and material deprivation, with a missed opportunity to gain evaluation marks. Some candidates generalised BAME groups however stronger candidates were able to discuss cultural differences between different groups and the impact on attainment. In school, factors such as the ethnocentric curriculum were well addressed. Some lower achieving answers were anecdotal. The majority of evaluation continues to be juxtaposed and candidates would benefit from further practice of this competency. There were nevertheless some very high quality responses which drew upon a range of studies such as Douglas, Feinstejn, Sewell, Sutton Trust, Strand, Archer and Francis.

Option 2 – Media

Compulsory question

- Q3. (a) (i)** Most candidates understood the data in the graph and were able to describe the trends and the issues of age. Stronger answers referred to an overall difference between two age groups in terms of attitudes towards whether there is a connection between video game violence and real life violence and then made accurate references to other trends. However, not all gave the comparative points between the different age groups which would enable them to access Band 3 marks. Several gave reasons for the patterns, which was not required. The best answers identified relationships between social characteristics, and the statistics. In most cases points were supported with reference to the data.
- Q3. (a) (ii)** The good answers clearly identified two clear ‘reasons’. The most popular reasons were the hypodermic syringe model, the desensitisation effect and moral panics. Higher achieving candidates choose two sociological reasons which were outlined, explained and supported with reference to writers or studies for example Packard and Bandura, Newson, Cohen. Candidates could draw on their knowledge and understanding required in the debates section of the specification to answer this question. Teachers should be advised that encouraging students to write in a clearly structured way often enhances the clarity of their answers. There is no requirement to provide an opening paragraph describing trends. Lower achieving candidates often described a number of reasons in insufficient detail. A significant number of responses relied heavily on common sense ideas and anecdotal references and examples. Such answers did not score high marks.
- Q3. (b)** This was an accessible question which required candidates to examine and make a judgement on sociological explanations of media representations of females in society. To do this effectively, candidates need to consider the evidence with commentary on what the evidence suggests in relation to the debate. Most candidates were able to construct a debate; while the best answers examined the sociological explanations in a detailed evaluative way. The highest achievers were able to examine writers such as Tunstall, Tuchman, Mulvey, Ferguson, McRobbie, Wolf, Dworkin. The strongest candidates were able to differentiate between different feminist views, which aided achievement of AO3 evaluation marks. Generally, evaluation was characterised by juxtaposition, resulting in lower AO3 marks. Lower achieving answers generalised the experiences of females which led to a more superficial debate.

- Q3. (c)** The focus here was on a consideration of Marxist views on the social construction of the news. This was a less popular question, however it attracted good responses. The best answers examined both traditional and neo-Marxist views in a detailed evaluative way, utilising evidence and contemporary examples effectively to enable a judgement to be made about the accuracy of the different views. Higher achieving answers considered a range of Marxist explanations such as Miliband, Edwards and Cromwell, GUMG, Philo. The higher achieving candidates referred to alternative views such as the pluralist, postmodern and feminist views; with some grappling with the intricacies of different Marxist perspectives. Some candidates were able to engage in high level sophisticated and well supported lines of debate and these were highly rewarded in each skill domain. Lower achievers produced common sense answers, assertive answers, lacking reference to empirical evidence and/or theory.

Option 3 – Religion [less popular option]

Compulsory question

- Q4. (a) (i)** Despite being attempted by few candidates, most understood the data and gave good answers. However lower scoring candidates made fewer comparisons. Stronger answers referred to an overall trend, for example the majority of both the UK born and non-UK born population identified themselves as Christian in 2011. Having described the trend, they supported it with evidence: 61.1% of those born in the UK and 47.5% of the non-UK born. This was followed by interpretation of the statistics: a 13.6 percentage point difference. The candidates then made accurate references to other trends. However, not all gave the comparative points which would enable them to access Band 3 marks. A significant number of candidates gave reasons for the trends, which was not required. Those who scored lower marks just quoted the percentages resulting in descriptive answers. In most cases, points were supported with reference to the data.
- Q4. (a) (ii)** High achieving candidates clearly identified two ‘reasons’, such as tradition and socialisation, social solidarity, reinforcement of identity. The best answers referred to sociological reasons which were outlined, explained and supported with reference to writers or studies, for example Bird, Pryce, Wallis and Bruce. Candidates could draw on their knowledge and understanding required in the debates section of the specification to answer this question. Teachers should be advised that encouraging students to write in a clearly structured way usually enhances the clarity of their answers. There is no requirement to provide an opening paragraph describing trends. Lower achieving candidates often described a number of reasons in insufficient detail.

- Q4 (b)** This was an accessible question and most candidates were able to contextualise the view as that of Marx himself. The candidates were required to examine and make a judgement on the Marxist view of the role of religion. The answers were generally well focused. In lower scoring answers, knowledge of Marxism lacked breadth and depth, although most answers contained some knowledge, referencing the work of Marx, Althusser and Engels. Those who scored the highest demonstrated an understanding of the intricacies of the Marxist/neo-Marxist debate and were able to offer alternative perspectives such as liberation theology, Weberianism, feminism and functionalism. Excellent responses were characterised by higher order essay writing techniques including a high level evaluative and analytical style. Unfortunately in many answers, evaluation continues to be characterised by juxtaposition. For example Marxism versus functionalism rather than a sustained debate leading to a judgement about the Marxist view that religion is the opium of the people.
- Q4. (c)** The focus here was on a consideration of a range of sociological explanations of the rise of NRMs. Candidates were aware of different NRMs in addition to studies such as Barker however there was less of a range of studies such as the work of Wallis, Weber, Bruce, Stark and Bainbridge. This meant that the focus on the debate, was sometimes more basic. There was some tendency towards answers that lacked breadth and depth of knowledge however higher achievers grappled with different theoretical perspectives such as Marxism, Weberianism, postmodernism, feminism. For lower achievers, evaluation tended to consist of a juxtaposition of ideas, some of which were based on common-sense assumptions.

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Unit 3: Power and Control

General comments

Overall Unit 3 is of a relatively high standard and candidates are generally very well prepared for this unit. It is very rare to see candidates fail to attempt questions.

Option 1, Crime and Deviance continues to be by far the most popular option, with a small number of centres opting for the Health and Disability and World Sociology options. Again, no centres opted for politics. There were very few rubric errors. Time seemed to be used well overall with appropriate allocation of time per question in the majority of questions however answers to 1ai) tended to be a little too brief and some felt it necessary to write everything they had revised in the essay questions.

Of the candidates who perhaps had not allocated their time as well as they could have, it would appear that they completed q1b or 1c first and had then left very little time for 1qai and q1aii. As a result many of these candidates only wrote a few lines for each of these questions, which was highly detrimental to the overall marks received. Some centres would be strongly advised to focus on timings for each question, in order to maximise candidate performance.

As with last year, in 20 mark and 40 mark questions, there was a relationship between quality and how well an answer was structured into meaningful paragraphs. Candidates should be encouraged to avoid 'walls of text' and organise their essays into clear 'points', logically presented for the highest marks.

One administration issue raised by examiners for the second year was that candidates did not write which questions they had attempted on the front of their examination booklet which then takes examiners some time to complete. Additionally, often names or candidates numbers were missing which can also cause issues for examiners. A small but significant number of candidates had near illegible handwriting. Centres are advised to contact the WJEC if they have concerns about a candidate's handwriting.

Questions 1, 2, 3, 4 (a) (i)

These questions are assessed on AO1, knowledge and understanding and AO2, application of knowledge. A few candidates (usually a centre effect) waste time by evaluating. The best prepared candidates understood the importance of providing a clear definition of the term/ concept and referred to relevant sociological examples and writers. Direct focus on the question was also essential for top band.

Questions 1, 2, 3, 4 (a) (ii)

These were answered very well in the crime and deviance and world sociology options. The best answers made reference to and then applied a range of relevant sociological evidence and examples that directly related to the question. Again some wasted time evaluating this evidence. A minority of candidates made assertions and used anecdotal evidence rather than using sociology.

Questions 1, 2, 3, 4 (b/c)

These essay questions are marked on all three skills: AO1, knowledge & understanding (13), AO2, application of knowledge (13) and AO3, evaluation (14). AO3 continues to be the weakest skill. Well-prepared candidates demonstrated that they understood the importance of using relevant sociological writers, concepts and evidence which was analysed and evaluated appropriately. Most candidates provided a clear introduction and conclusion, though not all. There was an increased number of examples of excellent, sustained, explicit evaluation. As with last year, a number of centres appeared to have provided 'templates' or 'model answers'. Examiners found that for the most part, these templates do not allow candidates to engage fully with the question and as such, penalised the most able.

Option 1 – Crime and Deviance

Q1. (a) (i) The responses to this question were weaker than expected. Few candidates were able to provide a clear and detailed definition of white-collar crime. The best candidates provided a clear definition of white-collar crime, referred to Sutherland and correctly discussed how it links to corporate and state crime. They then referred to sociologists (usually Marxists) that explore the different aspects of these types of crime. Many 'drifted' off topic to discuss areas such as working-class crime and theories of crime. The majority of candidates did not provide a sufficiently detailed response for this question for the top bands. Candidates should consider spending a little more time on this question, developing their points/examples fully.

Q1. (a) (ii) For this question, the best answers selected a range (at least 3, usually more) of sociological evidence and examples that directly related to gender, providing detailed explanations of that evidence. Overall, there was a clear understanding of crime being an overwhelmingly male problem, some awareness of changing patterns/nuances and some reference to victim patterns. It was evident that many candidates could have answered a 40 mark question on the topic (some were overly long as a consequence, taking time away from 1b/c). Weaker answers were list-like or lacking in range, stronger answers were wider in range and, at times, very detailed. Many candidates used examples that are not specifically related to gender and/or crime e.g. Merton's strain theory and Willis' 'lads' and applied these to the question. Although this received some credit, for top bands, candidates needed to refer to sociology specific to gender and crime. Weaker candidates made assertions and used anecdotal evidence. A significant number used the wrong sociologists' names for the explanations. There was some excellent use of statistics of gender and different areas of crime but also some dubious numbers were utilised e.g. percentages that did not add up to 100%!

Q1. (b) This essay was a far less popular choice and often there were weaker responses. It often felt like a 'fall-back' essay for those who did not know functionalist theories of crime. The minority of candidates that answered this question had plenty to say about official statistics, though essays were more descriptive and lacking in reference to sociologists/theory/evidence/examples compared to q1c. The best answers included more of these features, with the application of theory being quite impressive at times. These answers on the whole lacked structure and were slightly list-like. Many answers lacked any logical argument and didn't really relate back to the question. Most answers were one sided with few relating the reasons for questioning usefulness and reliability of the statistics to theories. These answers were less evaluative than the q1c option and many scored their evaluation marks through reaching mini conclusions in each paragraph. Although most candidates demonstrated an understanding of the different methods of measuring crime, the majority of candidates only discussed the practical issues in collecting official crime statistics, therefore not addressing the question of whether official statistics are an accurate measure of crime.

Q1. (c) This question was by far the most popular option and the stronger candidates showed impressive detailed knowledge of Functionalism and could interpret and evaluate the ideas and concepts at a high level, sustaining these skills throughout their answers. Clearly some centres had provided model answers for a question on Functionalism which were attempted with varying degrees of success/ accuracy. Nearly all candidates began with succinct contextual paragraphs about Functionalism then followed with Durkheim's theory of crime. Stronger answers offered detailed, often quite complex explanations. Weaker answers were simplistic and brief. Nearly all candidates referred to Merton and Cohen. Use of Hirschi was also frequent, as was reference to a variety of American subcultural theorists. Several of the best answers applied the principles of these theories to examples, with some of the best using contemporary, real life events or crimes to illustrate both the relevance/strengths and the weaknesses/limitations of the theories, therefore applying and evaluating simultaneously.

Even in weaker answers, most candidates made an attempt to evaluate, even if it was in the form of a single strength and weakness, throughout. Some candidates evaluated by juxtaposing Functionalism with other perspectives, but flipped the focus of the answer so that sometimes 80% of the answer (or more in a few cases) was not on functionalism or there were no links back to Functionalism. A few candidates offered a descriptive only response, void of evaluation. However, as always with theory questions, there was a significant number of candidates' essays just juxtaposing theories, often writing more about Marxism than Functionalism. As a result, a number of candidates forget the focus of the question and purely look at different theories, writing page upon irrelevant page about what causes crime. A large minority of candidates confused the work of different writers, particularly muddling Cohen's work with Merton. The vast majority of 'conclusions' don't actually conclude, they simply repeat what has already been said rather than make an assessment.

- Q2. (a) (i)** There was a range of quality of answers for this question. Most were at least reasonable – well-prepared candidates provided excellent, detailed definitions of sick role from both Parsons and other perspectives and made reference to sociology throughout. Weak candidates wrote generalised, non-sociological answers. Focus on sick role varied with the majority of being unable to give an entirely focused answer. The vast majority were able to associate this term with Parsons and functionalism. There were numbers of confused, seemingly very unprepared answers.
- Q2. (a) (ii)** This question was not answered well overall. On the whole this was answered poorly with candidates failing to focus on the relationship between health and age. A number of candidates' focus moved to social class rather than linking this back to social class and age. Others had clearly hoped for a gender and health question as many would turn the age issue to gender that women lived longer and discussed differences according to gender. Not many points from the indicative content were used. Answers also tended to be undeveloped. Many candidates appeared to be piecing an answer together by thinking across their knowledge of the topic as a whole which was sometimes done with thought but answers lacked precision and were often anecdotal/generalised as a result. Some however were answered very well with quite specific knowledge of studies on age and health. The best were able to refer to a number (at least 3) of relevant pieces of sociological evidence/ examples and use them to explain the relationship between age and health and illness, remaining focused on the question throughout. The weakest answers again lacked any reference to sociology and some did not focus on the question at all.
- Q2. (b)** This was the least popular choice when it came to the essays and was not as well answered as the q2c) option. Candidates did not have either the same breadth or depth of knowledge and understanding. A small number did however write excellent essays that provided answers which demonstrated a very good wide-ranging and detailed knowledge and understanding of class and health and illness. Candidates seemed well prepared, with a range of knowledge and evaluation mostly referring to the explanations. There was some focus on relevant sociologists but often this was only partially developed. The majority of candidates failed to effectively discuss the relationship between the two and most answers were simply descriptive.
- Q2. (c)** Most who studied this option opted for this essay. A range of marks was awarded here. A few were exceptional with detailed AO1, accurate and purposeful selection of evidence to support and a structured and logically presented argument throughout. Otherwise the recurring issue for theory questions was evident with using juxtaposed theories of health rather than focusing on a specific evaluation of the bio-medical model. Knowledge and understanding of theories was evident but AO3 tended to be undeveloped if at all present. Again, weaker answers lacked sociological content and were much more generalised in nature.

Option 3 – Politics

No candidates attempted this option.

Option 4 – World Sociology

- Q4. (a) (i)** There was a range of quality of answers for this question with the majority lacking sociological knowledge that specifically addresses the meaning of urbanisation. As a result, several responses were generalised, making minimal reference to relevant sociological writers, concepts etc. The best answers contained a clear definition of urbanisation, remained focused and referred to at least one relevant sociologist.
- Q4 (a) (ii)** As with question 4ai) answers ranged from excellent to very limited in terms of sociological knowledge. The best were able to refer to a number (at least 3) of relevant pieces of sociological evidence/ examples and use them to explain health inequalities in the developing world. The weakest answers again lacked any reference to sociology. Some had an impressive knowledge of a range of health inequalities, providing evidence and explanations on issues such as FGM, HIV/ AIDS, Cholera and Ebola.
- Q4. (b)** This was the slightly less popular choice when it came to the essays and produced responses of slightly lesser quality in comparison to question 4c). A few candidates provided answers which demonstrated a very good wide-ranging and detailed knowledge and understanding of the role of aid as a solution to global inequality and were able to analyse and evaluate various perspectives effectively. Weaker candidates wrote a more generalised response about the use of Aid. Very few thought to explore factors other than Aid which might also be a solution to global inequality thus limiting themselves in terms of range.
- Q4. (c)** This was the slightly more popular choice when it came to the essays and produced some responses of higher quality in comparison to question 4b). A few candidates provided answers which demonstrated very good wide-ranging and detailed knowledge and understanding of modernisation theory, remained focused on the question and were able to analyse and evaluate it effectively. However, weaker candidates used this as an opportunity to write a generalised response about the different theories that attempt to explain development/ underdevelopment without linking them directly to the question. A number of muddled various theories, particularly Dependency and World Systems theories.

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Unit 4: Social Inequality and Methods of Sociological Enquiry

Compulsory Section A

- Q1. (a)** Most candidates were able to identify reasons why the researchers decided to use in depth interviews in their research. However, a number of candidates confused in depth interviews with structured interviews; where this was the case, it was reflected in the marks awarded. The key to success in this question is context; being able to pick out the specific strengths of the method which might have been useful in helping the researchers to achieve their research aims. Many offered generic and often inaccurate answers. Few candidates scored full marks for this question, largely because of the failure to contextualise their response.
- Q1. (b)** Once again, examiners reported that a significantly high number of rehearsed, generic research designs. In this examination, candidates were at liberty to select the type of data they would collect [quantitative or qualitative]. This was an excellent opportunity to contextualise their justification although only a few seized this opportunity. Whilst research decisions often demonstrated some accurate knowledge, those that were not explained in the context of the design brief had limited value. Many made assumptions in this particular design brief. Many candidates ignored the instruction to select a representative sample and chose instead to select “young people”, assuming that social networking sites would have a bigger role in their lives than in the lives of other age groups. The sub text of the brief could have been a comparative study of the role that social networking sites play. Clearly there would be some restrictions for an A Level student in terms of what might be practical but the key to success in this question is context. Justification of the choices in relation to the brief followed by problems and their potential impact is expected.

Whilst centres appear to have established a sound understanding of the task, the same cannot be said for the success criteria. Indeed, the quality of responses to this question was, on the whole, very average. As in previous series, a particular weakness in many designs was sampling. Nevertheless, some answers did demonstrate an excellent understanding of both research procedures and the reasons for the decisions made. Some candidates were able to connect their decisions to the task and to wider methodological issues and those candidates were rewarded accordingly. However, a significant number merely described their research design offering very superficial justifications which were focused more on the generic strengths of the method rather than the reasons why this method was the best for the task.

Similarly, the best answers considered most of the stages of research and offered methodologically sound reasons for decisions made whilst weaker answers made either superficial or no reference to some stages of the research design.

Some designs were unrealistic and as such demonstrated a lack of engagement with the task. Some candidates wrote a great deal about why they had **not** chosen to use other methods, this was not required. Many candidates cited problems but did not consider the impact that these might have as the brief had instructed them.

Candidates should be advised that the best answers are clearly contextualised and demonstrate a sound understanding that decisions about research design should be focused primarily on the research aims.

Section B

Q2. (a) and Q3. (a)

Most candidates were able to offer examples of gender inequality from two areas of life. It was evident that some centres had misunderstood the task as answers lacked actual empirical evidence or cited statistics. Some of the evidence cited was not appropriate for illustrating gender inequalities; this was particularly the case where education was used. Candidates seemed confused between difference and inequality. For example, many talked about differences in attainment but this is only relevant if the reason for the difference is unequal treatment and this can be supported with evidence. Centres should take care when preparing candidates for this question and beware of examples and evidence that focus on difference rather than inequality. The best answers cited relevant research evidence rather than anecdotal accounts of gender inequality. Similarly, the best answers made reference to a range of evidence and this evidence was explained in the context of how it demonstrated gender inequality.

Teachers are advised to urge candidates to read the instructions in the questions very carefully. Where they are asked for two areas of life they need to select two different areas of life. A significant number of candidates relied on examples rather than evidence and this prevented them from achieving band 4 marks.

Centres should be advised that candidates are not required to explain why the inequality exists. They are required to explain what the evidence shows and part of their AO2 mark is awarded for the appropriateness of the evidence offered.

The best answers demonstrated range and detail whilst weaker answers lacked either detail, range or both.

Q3. (a) The same issues were evident as in this question as they were for 2a.

- Q2. (b)** Most were able to identify this as the Marxist view. However, the vast majority of answers were merely descriptive accounts of what Marxists say rather than an examination of the value of what they say. A particular problem in this question was that many candidates offered accounts of Marxist theory of society rather than Marxist explanations of social inequality. Clearly there is a lot of overlap between the two but there is also a lot of irrelevant material such as Marx's theory of social change which was less important in this particular essay. Many criticised Marxist ideas about polarisation as out of date, completely ignoring recent evidence of polarisation. Where candidates referred to alternative views of social inequality they did so in a descriptive way and this meant that evaluation was juxtaposed. Very few candidates utilised evidence or examples as vehicles for evaluation of the theory in question and this meant that their AO2 and AO3 marks rarely reached top band. Teachers would be wise to focus on the ability of candidates to effectively demonstrate all three skills as a descriptive account of theories will not enable to access the higher marks for AO2 and AO3.
- Q3. (b)** This question was, on the whole, either answered very well or very badly. Some candidates were able to utilise their wide -ranging knowledge effectively in their response to the command in weighing up the usefulness of feminist ideas about social inequality. Others had a vague understanding of feminist ideas and some did not address the notion of usefulness in any way. The same problems identified with question 2b were also evident in answers to question 3b. There were many descriptive accounts of feminist ideas.

Teachers are advised to focus on literacy skills and in particular the ability of candidates to construct well informed, well supported discussions that are focused on the statement/view/ theory in the question. An increasing feature of some examination scripts is the low level of AO2 skills. Teachers are advised that developing high level AO2 skills is the most effective way to achieve high level success in this examination.

The Examination Team would like to thank centres for their efforts and hard work in preparing candidates for this examination. Exemplar material will be made available in the Autumn term.



WJEC
245 Western Avenue
Cardiff CF5 2YX
Tel No 029 2026 5000
Fax 029 2057 5994
E-mail: exams@wjec.co.uk
website: www.wjec.co.uk