



GCE A LEVEL EXAMINERS' REPORTS

**SOCIOLOGY
A LEVEL**

SUMMER 2017

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**EDUQAS
GCE A LEVEL SOCIOLOGY**

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COMPONENT ONE: SOCIALISATION AND CULTURE

General Comments

The examining team was, on the whole, satisfied with the standards achieved in this first 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.

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 was, on the whole, acceptable.

Compulsory section A

Q1a

Most candidates were able to demonstrate some knowledge of the meaning of primary socialisation. However, a significant number 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. Similarly, some candidates failed to address both components of the term; primary and socialisation.

Q1b

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 people learn adult roles. However, 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 process of socialisation and this, unsurprisingly, had a negative impact on their answers. Candidates did not always talk about role models, sanctions and so on and relied on generic descriptions of what socialisation is. Candidates did not always use the item effectively to illustrate their answer and some made no reference to it at all.

Section B

Q2 a

There were some excellent answers to this very accessible question. The best answers showed a sound knowledge and understanding of the reasons why cohabitation has increased. However, a significant number of candidates failed to offer evidence to support their reasons and neither did they explain what the evidence shows where evidence was used. Where candidates failed to access the higher mark bands it was often the result of their failure to explain the reasons offered. The best answers offered three or more reasons which were explained with some supporting sociological evidence and/ or examples.

Weaker candidates offered largely anecdotal reasons rather than sociological ones. Some answers were either very lengthy or very brief; teachers would be wise to offer advice on timing so that candidates do not waste time on lower mark questions.

Q2b

This was essentially an evidence based essay though many candidates offered descriptive accounts of theoretical ideas. Whilst it was entirely acceptable for candidates to present these ideas, success was measured by the effectiveness of their evaluation of these ideas which required empirical evidence. Candidates who did examine whether relationships in families are equal, almost always focused on conjugal relationships. This was accepted, however, it is worth noting that relationships can cover other family members. Therefore, there was an opportunity for candidates to consider more than just conjugal roles should they have wished to do so. Most responses to this question failed to utilise contemporary research evidence; instead they relied on rather dated rehearsed material which was not as appropriate as it could have been.

Q2c

This question was answered well by some candidates. However, there were a significant number of weak answers where it was evident that candidates did not understand the focus of the debate. The best answers accurately identified the view in the question and focused on outlining, analysing and evaluating it. Answers that merely wrote descriptive accounts of theories of family did not score highly in AO2. 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 an idea and as a result candidates failed to secure high level marks for either 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. A significant number of candidates presented essays that were almost entirely one sided, arguing for the view in the question rather than debating it as the command words required.

Nevertheless, there were some excellent well- crafted responses.

Q3a

There were some very good responses to this question and many candidates were highly rewarded for their precise and detailed knowledge and understanding of the relationship between social class and membership of youth cultures. However there was also a significant number of candidates who demonstrated very tentative knowledge and even less understanding and as a result failed to access the higher mark bands. As with the Family option, some candidates cited reasons for the relationship but failed to explain them and this was reflected in their AO2 mark.

Q3b

Generally this section was reasonably well attempted and there were some very good answers. The question allowed candidates to utilise a wide range of knowledge and on the whole the quality of answers was good. Where candidates failed to score highly this was, unsurprisingly the result of weak higher order skills. Teachers are advised to focus on essay writing skills and in particular, the ability to demonstrate high level analysis and evaluation as this will enable candidates to access the highest marks. Some candidates were unsure of the meaning of spectacular youth cultures and others gave lengthy descriptive examples of them. Those who merely described a range of spectacular youth cultures may have been rewarded AO1 marks but would have failed to access high AO2 or AO3 marks.

Q3c

Section C Education Compulsory question

Q4a

This was answered quite well by many candidates. The best answers presented different theoretical ideas about the hidden curriculum which were supported by examples and/or references to writers or studies. The best answers focused on the impact of the hidden curriculum as required in the question. Some candidates had not been appropriately prepared for the examination because they were clearly confused about the success criteria. It was not necessary to have a debate though this was not penalised. AO1 and AO2 marks were at stake here so there was no requirement to evaluate the ideas presented. Most candidates did not address the influence of the hidden curriculum but instead concentrated on describing what it is and because of this they were not able to access the higher mark bands. Candidates are advised to read the question/command very carefully.

Q4b

This was a popular question and many candidates answered it well. The best answers did not list a range of different explanations for differential attainment but examined them in relation to factors outside the school. This enabled them to make a judgement on the view. Weaker answers merely listed alternative explanations and added a “bolted on” evaluative comment in relation to the view in their conclusion. The weakest answers were confused about what factors outside the school might be. In most answers there was a distinct lack of research evidence which could have been utilised to enable evaluative commentary on the view.

4c

This was a slightly less popular question. It was answered well by some candidates but many candidates failed to focus on gender in their essay. Very few candidates utilised empirical evidence and this meant that they were not able to access the highest mark bands. The best answers examined a range of possible explanations for the differences in educational outcomes between males and females; assessing the value of each as the question demanded. Weaker answers listed different explanations but failed to assess them which meant that they might be able to access a reasonable mark for AO1 but AO2 and AO3 skills marks were lower.

Media

Q5a

5b

5c

**EDUQAS
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COMPONENT 2: METHODS OF SOCIOLOGICAL ENQUIRY

This is the first year of the new A Level Eduqas Specification. Candidates had been very well prepared for this component and the standard was impressive.

There are two questions. The first has three parts. Candidates are required to answer both questions. Most candidates tackled all three parts of question 1 and question 2. There was evidence that they had been well prepared in relation to the division of time on the questions.

The three parts of question one are compulsory.

- (a) In order to access the higher mark bands candidates were required to identify a possible weakness of the research and in doing so to use material from the item. The vast majority of candidates were able to identify a possible weakness with many focusing on the issue of representativeness and/or generalisability although those who then went on to say the lack of men was the issue then became tangled up with that rather than focussing on the research as described in the first sentence of the item. Some identified the lack of reliability citing the fact that the research was a small-scale qualitative study, others suggested there might have been interviewer bias.

Some candidates did not use the item and therefore lost marks in AO2. Some wasted valuable time referring to other research. This seemed to be on a centre/s basis. There is no need to make reference to other sociological studies and in fact candidates often did it to the detriment of using the item and/or developing the possible weakness they had identified.

Stronger candidates used their knowledge and understanding of key research concepts such as reliability, representativeness and generalisability to develop the possible weakness they had identified. A few candidates identified more than one possible weakness which usually meant both were undeveloped.

- (b) There were a small but significant number of candidates who did not understand what a focus group is. Those candidates struggled to gain many/any marks. However there were many excellent responses to this question many used the item well noting that the research was on a potentially sensitive topic and therefore the women could have felt more confident if they were in a group situation. They commented on the ability to bounce ideas off each other in a focus group and in doing so might well come up with detail the researcher might not have thought to ask about in a one on one interview. Many who understood the notion of a focus group referred to the validity of the data that a focus group might yield.

Once again, as with (a), some candidates referred to other research rather than focusing on the item as instructed in the question. This is not required and there are no marks available for doing so. Candidates should be advised not to do this.

- (c) There were some outstanding answers to this question and the depth of knowledge of some candidates in relation to sampling techniques, the issues that need to be considered and the sampling techniques used by sociologists in their research was impressive. These candidates were rewarded appropriately.

Unlike (a) and (b) candidates are required to refer to sociological studies for (c). The question clearly instructs them to do this. Candidates should be advised to read questions carefully before they begin to write. Apart from the fact that the question is asking them to use the item and to use sociological studies it is asking them to identify issues when choosing sampling techniques.

The issues need to be linked to sampling techniques which means they need to understand how a sampling technique may be impacted by an issue or be directly related to an issue for example if they want to argue that one issue is gaining access to difficult to reach groups and that therefore snowball sampling could be used they then need to explain what snowball sampling is and how that would gain them access to potentially hard to reach groups. It is when explaining the sampling technique in relation to the issue that it then becomes useful to refer to a sociological study which has used the technique. This should not be just a throw away reference to a study but rather a study should be used.

The question asks for sociological studies, i.e. more than one. Therefore candidates who only referred to one study were unable to access the highest mark band. This was another example of the importance of carefully reading the question. The question asked the candidates to use the item and most did so.

Some used studies from psychology. The question asks for sociological studies and therefore candidates should be advised to use sociological studies particularly as those who used studies from psychology often wasted time describing them and describing what the researchers found.

Some candidates misread the question and either spent time doing a critique of the research on lad culture and discussing how they could have accessed the women or spent time discussing the strengths and weaknesses of various research methods rather than sampling techniques.

The mark scheme should be referred to for the range of issues that might have been identified as well as for some possible sociological studies that could be used. The latter is by no means a definitive list.

2. Candidates are advised to spend approximately half of the time available on this question. It is worth half of the marks. The marks are allocated on the basis of 8 for AO1 that is for the research design, 10 for the way in which they justify their design and a further 12 for the issues the design raises- that is the impact of the research design on the quality of the research. There are no marks for resolving the issues. Some candidates attempted to rewrite their whole research design. There are no marks for this. Stronger candidates identified the issues raised by their research design in relation to either key research concepts or other research concepts and went on to explain the concepts in relation to their particular research design. Weaker candidates often used all the concepts in one sentence demonstrating their lack of knowledge and understanding.

There are a number of key elements to a research design which candidates should be expected to address. These include:

1. The operationalisation of the terms in the brief.
In this case career aspirations, young people and local area. The operationalisation of the terms is crucial to research and candidates should be advised to think carefully about this. Weaker candidates often suggested they would operationalise young people as from primary school age to 25. This is clearly inappropriate and simply gave them problems later in the design. Stronger candidates said they would use 16-18 year olds and justified it on the basis that they themselves fell into that age group thereby potentially making access easier.
2. The sampling technique to be used.
Many suggested very complicated sampling techniques often involving school/college registers without any consideration of how they might, if at all, access these registers. The stronger candidates tended to suggest they would use quota sampling and access their sample in a local shopping area frequented by candidates on, for example, a Saturday morning.
3. The research method to be used including the theoretical basis of the type of data the method would enable them to collect.

Some candidates used two or even three methods and thereby spent a long time describing each one. Candidates should be advised that they would find it generally easier if they chose one method and then justified it in relation to the type of data the method would enable them to collect and then used the key methodological concepts to consider the impact this would have on the quality of the research.
4. Ethics
The majority of candidates did address ethics though some more cursorily than others.
5. Practical issues
Most candidates addressed practical issues of time and money. For the most part candidates referred to the fact that they themselves were involved in thinking about their own career aspirations.
6. Key concepts
Apart from the points above candidates must be advised that they should know and understand the meaning of the key concepts and understand that it demonstrates a lack of understanding when they, for example, use validity and reliability in the same sentence as if they were somehow interchangeable.

Overall many of these designs were a pleasure to read and the impression was that many of the candidates would be an asset to future research teams.

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COMPONENT: THREE POWER AND STRATIFICATION

This is the first year of the new A Level Eduqas Specification. The standard of preparation for the paper was on the whole very good although there was a noticeable centre effect with some more prepared than others. There is a compulsory section and then a choice of options.

There were few rubric errors although some candidates did not answer one or more of the questions. That appeared to be a lack of preparation rather than a rubric error per se.

All candidates are required to do two 40 mark essays and two 20 mark answers. Some candidates spent an unnecessarily long time on the 20 minute answers to the detriment of the second 40 minute essay.

There are four options. Option 1 Crime and Deviance was by far the most popular however it was welcome to see that a significant number of centres were teaching World Sociology. The least popular was Health and Disability.

Section A

1 (a)

This question required candidates to identify two areas of social life and provide evidence of gender inequalities. Most candidates did identify two areas but then a significant number explained the gender inequalities rather than providing evidence of inequalities.

The workplace and education were the two most commonly chosen areas.

The question asks for evidence which could be in the form of research by a named sociologist, a relevant report and/or appropriately cited statistical data. A generalised statement such as 'statistics show' without any citation would not enable a candidate to go above basic. Similarly long explanations and/or evaluation were not required. The best candidates supplied several pieces of evidence for each area and were rewarded appropriately.

See mark scheme for suggestions of evidence in a number of areas

1 (b)

Candidates approached this question in a number of ways and as long as they were focused on Marxist explanations they were duly rewarded. However there was a significant number who thought that a cursory first paragraph on Marxism was enough prior to moving to all the other sociological explanations they knew. Candidates must be advised that if a question asks them to evaluate a theory then they must provide a detailed exposition of the theory. The best candidates provided such an exposition in an evaluative way, thus as well as detailing Marxist explanations of social inequalities they demonstrated they were able to do so in an evaluative way thereby avoiding evaluation either by juxtaposition or by tacking it on at the end.

Some candidates, in particular those who had chosen option 1 decided that this was a question on Marxist explanations of crime and deviance. It is important that candidates are advised to read the question very carefully. The questions in Section A are not option specific they are always questions on evidence, views and explanations of social inequalities in general.

1 (c)

This question was often poorly done. Candidates had a tendency to lump all ethnic groups together, very little was mentioned about the majority ethnic group and there were sweeping generalisations about, for example, all Asians. The best answers discussed explanations of ethnic inequalities but weaker ones tended to identify a couple of areas of social life and provide evidence/explanation of ethnic inequalities in those areas. Some read as prepared answers for 1(a)

Section B

Option 1 Crime and Deviance

2 (a)

Candidates were clearly engaged by this question and many had been well prepared for questions of this nature. However once again many candidates did not address the specifics of the question that is why some sociologists argue that the media amplifies deviance. Candidates who simply cited sociologists such as Cohen, Hall and Thornton without identifying why those sociologists argue the media amplifies deviance could not access the higher mark bands.

(b)

Those who chose this question were for the most part able to distinguish between different types of feminists and provide relevant names to support their arguments. There were however some very generalised accounts and some bordering on common sense.

(c)

This question was done extremely well by a minority of candidates but weaker candidates seemed to opt for it and often provided generalised accounts based on anecdotal evidence and media stories. Candidates should be advised that the longer essays on this paper require a discursive response with appropriate evidence to support the claims they make.

Option 2

Health and Disability

Few candidates chose this option

2(a)

A number of candidates gave generalised responses to this question. Candidates are required to identify sociologists who argue the view put forward in the question. The mark scheme has a detailed list of relevant sociologists.

2(b)

This question was a straightforward evaluation of the functionalist explanation of health and illness. Again candidates are expected to support the claims they make with relevant sociologists. Reference to Parsons was surprisingly lacking from a number of answers.

As mentioned above with regard to the 40 mark answers on option 1, candidates should be advised that the longer essays on this paper require a discursive response with appropriate evidence to support the claims they make.

2(c)

There is a wide range of relevant material available in relation to social class and morbidity and mortality some of which candidates made reference to. However others cited one or two reports/sociologists and then moved to a more generalised/anecdotal response. Candidates who did this were not able to access the higher mark bands.

Option 3 Power and Politics

4(a)

A number of candidates wrote a discursive essay in response to this question rather than focussing on the specifics of the question. There are no marks available for evaluation and therefore candidates should be advised that they will be wasting valuable time if they do so.

4(b)

The emphasis in the question was on the growth of new social movements. The mark scheme details the range of material that is available, some of which candidates might have been expected to refer to. Descriptions of NSMs without evaluating their growth did not allow candidates to access higher mark bands.

4(c)

This was the more popular of the two essay questions for this option.

The notion that political power is widely distributed in the contemporary UK is based on the pluralist explanation of power and it was surprising that a number of candidates did not even mention pluralist ideas. As mentioned in the report on these 40 mark questions in other options candidates should be advised that the longer essays on this paper require a discursive response with appropriate evidence to support the claims they make.

Option 4 World Sociology

5 (a)

There was evidence that some candidates had a detailed knowledge and understanding of why some sociologists argue that aid does not eliminate poverty. However some candidates wasted valuable time by evaluating whether aid does or does not reduce poverty. The question asks why some sociologists argue aid does not reduce poverty and therefore to evaluate is to misread the question. Candidates were rewarded if they identified those sociologists who do argue that aid does not reduce poverty. Those that provided generalised arguments were not able to access the higher mark bands.

5(b)

There were some excellent responses to this question and candidates had clearly been well prepared.

5(c)

This question was less well done than 5(b) and many candidates simply focused on the economic impact of globalisation to the detriment of the cultural and political impact. The mark scheme details a range of materials available in this area.

In summary it is vital that candidates read questions carefully and focus on the specifics of the question. In particular section A is concerned with social inequalities and the first question in that section is asking for evidence not long explanations or anecdotes.

The (a) questions worth 20 marks on the options do not require candidates to evaluate but the 40 mark essay questions do. Evaluation should permeate the essays rather than be juxtaposed or tacked on at the end.



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