

GCE 2005

January Series



Mark Scheme

Sociology

Unit SC3W

Mark schemes are prepared by the Principal Examiner and considered, together with the relevant questions, by a panel of subject teachers. This mark scheme includes any amendments made at the standardisation meeting attended by all examiners and is the scheme which was used by them in this examination. The standardisation meeting ensures that the mark scheme covers the candidates' responses to questions and that every examiner understands and applies it in the same correct way. As preparation for the standardisation meeting each examiner analyses a number of candidates' scripts: alternative answers not already covered by the mark scheme are discussed at the meeting and legislated for. If, after this meeting, examiners encounter unusual answers which have not been discussed at the meeting they are required to refer these to the Principal Examiner.

It must be stressed that a mark scheme is a working document, in many cases further developed and expanded on the basis of candidates' reactions to a particular paper. Assumptions about future mark schemes on the basis of one year's document should be avoided; whilst the guiding principles of assessment remain constant, details will change, depending on the content of a particular examination paper.

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Dr Michael Cresswell Director General

QUALITY OF WRITTEN COMMUNICATION

Where candidates are required to produce extended written material in English, the scheme of assessment must make specific reference to the assessment of the quality of written communication. Candidates must be required to:

- select and use a form and style of writing appropriate to purpose and complex subject matter;
- organise relevant information clearly and coherently, using specialist vocabulary when appropriate;
- ensure text is legible, and spelling, grammar and punctuation are accurate, so that meaning is clear.

The assessment criteria for quality of written communication apply only to the assessment of parts (e) and (f) of the questions. The following criteria should be applied in conjunction with the mark scheme.

The quality of written communication bands must be regarded as integral to the appropriate mark scheme band even though they are listed separately in the mark scheme. Examiners should note that, in the assessment of candidates' sociological knowledge and skills, the assessment of the Quality of Written Communication will be judged through the assessment of the clarity and appropriateness of the sociological material presented.

In the 1 – 7 band, candidates' answers are likely to be characterised by the poor logical expression of ideas and the use of a limited range of conceptual terms, perhaps often used imprecisely and/or inaccurately. Spelling, punctuation and grammar may show serious deficiencies and frequent errors, perhaps impairing the intelligibility of significant parts of the answer.

In the 8 – 15 band, candidates' answers are likely to be characterised by the fair to good logical expression of ideas and the competent use of a reasonable range of conceptual terms. Spelling, punctuation and grammar will be of a reasonable standard. Commonly used words and sociological terms will generally be spelt correctly. There may be minor errors of punctuation and grammar, but these will not seriously impair the intelligibility of the answer.

In the 16 – 20 band, candidates' answers are likely to be characterised by the very good to excellent logical expression of ideas and the precise use of a broad range of conceptual terms. Spelling, punctuation and grammar will be of a very good to excellent standard. Commonly and less commonly used words and sociological terms will almost always be spelt correctly. Punctuation and grammar will be used correctly throughout to facilitate the intelligibility of the answer.

SOCIOLOGICAL METHODSAnswer **all** parts of the Question.

1**Total for this Question: 60 marks**

(a) Explain what is meant by a “sampling frame” (Item A , line 7.)	(2 marks)
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Two marks for an appropriate explanation or definition, such as: a list of all members of the research population.

One mark for an example only, such as: electoral roll.

(b) Suggest two social factors apart from age and gender that could be used in the creation of a stratified sample for the study outlined in Item A .	(4 marks)
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Two marks for each of two social factors, such as:

- social class;
- ethnicity;
- marital status;
- housing tenure.

No marks for age or gender.

(c) Suggest three disadvantages of using intensive interviews apart from those mentioned in Item A .	(6 marks)
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Two marks for each of three appropriate disadvantages, such as:

- categorising lengthy responses to open-ended questioning;
- contradictory statements/views within the data;
- difficulty in comparing the responses of different respondents;
- irrelevant content;
- interpretation of meanings;
- lack of reliability;
- interviewer bias.

No marks for ‘time-consuming’ or ‘costly’.

(d) Identify and briefly explain two advantages to sociologists of being able to “actively join in with the research subjects in their everyday life” (Item A , line 9).	(8 marks)
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Two marks for each of two appropriate advantages identified, such as:

- establishing closer relationships with group members – gaining access to key informants;
- establishing greater trust with group members;
- researchers directly experience the research subjects’ everyday life;
- access to aspects of the research subjects’ activities which otherwise might be denied to a non-participant;
- participant researchers become ‘doers’ rather than just ‘watchers’;
- participating is a more normal social activity than simply observing or recording behaviour.

Two further marks in each case for an appropriate explanation of the advantage offered. For example:

- Establishing closer relationships with group members may allow access to key informants who can open up aspects of the research group's activities that may otherwise remain hidden.
- Establishing greater trust is likely to lead to research subjects being more honest and open in their behaviour and expressed attitudes.
- Directly experiencing the research subject's everyday life allows for the creation of data that are higher in validity.

(e) Examine the problems some sociologists may find when using secondary data in their research. (20 marks)
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0 No relevant points.

1 – 7 Answers in this band will show only limited knowledge and understanding.

Lower in the band, this may be one or two quasi-commonsensical points about secondary data in general. Higher in the band, answers will show a limited, undeveloped sociological knowledge, for example, two or three weak descriptive points about some examples of secondary data. Interpretation of material may be simplistic or at a tangent to the question, for example a weak account of a research study that used quantitative data. Analysis will be very limited or non-existent.

8 – 15 Answers in this band will show reasonable knowledge and understanding.

Lower in the band this might be confined to a competent if basic account of a few problems with secondary data. Interpretation may be limited and not explicitly linked to the demands of the question; for instance, answers may be diverted into often lengthy descriptive accounts of particular examples of secondary data such as the Census, poorly linked to the question; or evaluation in the form of a separate list of strengths of secondary data not directly related to the problems identified in the answer.

Higher in the band, knowledge will be broader and/or deeper, and will begin to identify a wider range of problems with using secondary data. Candidates will identify more than one form of secondary data. Material will be accurate, though at times its relevance may not be made explicit. There may be some limited explicit analysis or evaluation, for instance, through some weakly developed comparison of secondary and primary data. However, this is **not** a requirement, even to reach the top of the band. Evaluation will begin to be more closely related to the problems identified in the answer.

16 – 20 Answers in this band will display sound, conceptually detailed knowledge and understanding of sociological material relating to both quantitative and qualitative secondary data. This will be accurately and sensitively interpreted to meet the demands of the question. The candidate will show the ability to organise material and analyse and/or evaluate so as to produce a coherent and relevant answer. Evaluation will be related to the problems identified in the answer.

Candidates will consider a range of problems of collecting and using secondary data. Material may be drawn from issues of theoretical preference, validity, reliability, comparison and representativeness; issues of authenticity/verification; availability; accessibility; comparison with primary data; as a source of hypotheses; ethics; utility in relation to different research contexts and issues.

Lower in the band, answers may examine a more limited range of material. Higher in the band, answers may be more detailed and complete, and/or may show a clear rationale in the organisation of material leading to a distinct conclusion.

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| (f) Using material from Item B and elsewhere, assess the claim that a sociologist's choice of research methods is based mainly on practical and ethical factors. (20 marks) |
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0 No relevant points.

1 – 7 In this band, analysis/evaluation will be very limited or non-existent, and answers will show only a limited knowledge and understanding.

Lower in the band, there may be one or two quasi-commonsensical points about methods in general, or material ineffectually recycled from Item B with little understanding of relevant issues. Higher in the band, answers will show a limited, undeveloped sociological knowledge, for example a few insubstantial points about a research method(s) with little or no specific focus on the factors influencing choice of research methods. Interpretation of material may be simplistic or at a tangent to the question. Analysis/evaluation will be very limited or non-existent.

8 – 15 In this band there will be some limited analysis and/or evaluation (though lower in the band this will be implicit), and answers will show reasonable knowledge and understanding of some potentially relevant material.

Lower in the band, some suitable material will be correctly identified and a broadly accurate if basic account offered, for example of some relevant influences over choice of research method. Some unfocused material may also appear, for example, unfocused descriptions of specific studies.

Higher in the band, knowledge and understanding of material will be broader and/or deeper, and the answer will deal explicitly with practical and ethical influences on choice of research methods and will begin to address theoretical issues. However, answers may lack a balanced coverage of the range of influences on choice of method. Interpretation of material will be largely appropriate to the demands of the question. There will be some limited explicit analysis and/or evaluation, for example through some brief contextualisation in a specific study or a weak comparison of two or more influences on choice of method.

16 – 20 In this band, analysis and evaluation will be explicit and relevant, and answers will show sound, conceptually detailed knowledge and understanding of relevant sociological material drawn from Item B and elsewhere concerning the factors influencing choice of research method. This will be accurately and sensitively interpreted to meet the demands of the question. Analysis and evaluation will be explicit and relevant.

Answers will identify practical, ethical and theoretical influences and may draw on issues such as time, cost, accessibility, availability, methodological preference, confidentiality, consent etc. Not all of these issues need to be addressed, even for full marks. Analysis and evaluation will be explicit, perhaps being anchored in a direct comparison of the influence of theoretical, practical and ethical factors, or through some understanding of the interplay between factors contextualised in a particular study. Explicit analysis and evaluation may also be shown through a recognition that some factors are positive influences, whilst others are constraints, on choice of research method.

Lower in the band, interpretation may be less selective or evaluation less developed and more list-like. There may be some focus on which, if any, factor exerts the greatest influence over choice of method. Higher in the band, interpretation will be more focused and evaluation more thorough, and answers may show a clear rationale in the organisation of material leading to a distinct conclusion. There will be some focus on which, if any, factor exerts the greatest influence over choice of method.

