



General Certificate of Education

Sociology 5191

SC3W Sociological Methods

Mark Scheme

2007 examination - January series

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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SC3W

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, punctuation and grammar 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 METHODS

Answer **all** parts of the Question.

1

Total for this question: 60 marks

(a) Explain what is meant by a ‘longitudinal’ survey (Item A , line 1).

(2 marks)

Two marks for an appropriate explanation or definition of ‘longitudinal’, such as surveying a group of research participants at intervals over an extended period of time.

One mark for simply noting that they take place over a long period of time or for an appropriate example.

(b) Suggest two problems, apart from the one identified in Item A , with ‘joining in the activities of the group under study’ when carrying out sociological research (Item A , line 15).
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(4 marks)

Two marks for each of two problems, such as:

- the group may bar access;
- it may lead to researcher over-identification with the group;
- it requires high level interpersonal skills;
- it can be more stressful than other research techniques;
- the researcher may lack the social characteristics necessary to be accepted into the group;
- personal danger to the researcher;
- ‘Hawthorne Effect’;
- possibility of participating in illegal acts.

Note: no reward for ‘time-consuming’.

(c) Suggest three disadvantages of ‘using questions with fixed response categories’ in sociological research (Item A , line 5).
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(6 marks)

Two marks for each of three appropriate disadvantages of ‘using questions with fixed response categories’.

Disadvantages could include:

- difficult for the researcher to avoid overlapping response categories;
- the researcher may not anticipate the complete range of responses;
- discourages respondents from reflecting on the question;
- resultant data is lower in validity;
- less suitable for finding out reasons/causes/feelings etc;
- researcher is imposing their own framework/views.

(d) Identify and briefly explain two advantages of carrying out overt rather than covert observation in sociological research (Item A , lines 16 – 17). <i>(8 marks)</i>
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Two marks for each of two advantages associated with carrying out overt observation.

Appropriate advantages could include:

- the observer can ask more direct questions of group members;
- the observer avoids having to maintain a covert identity/role;
- the researcher is joining with the group's permission;
- field notes can be taken at the time of observation;
- it may be easier for researchers to select which activities they join in;
- avoids the ethical issue of deception.

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

- the observer can ask more direct questions of group members: this allows the researcher to clarify the meanings of the group's behaviour;
- the observer avoids having to maintain a covert identity/role: this reduces any risk of the research ending prematurely through being 'unmasked';
- the researcher is joining with the group's permission: this means the research is ethically stronger as informed consent has been obtained.

	(e) Examine the factors that influence a sociologist's choice of research method.	(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 research methods in general.

Higher in the band, answers will show limited, undeveloped sociological knowledge, for example, two or three weak insubstantial points about methods or studies. Interpretation of material may be simplistic or at a tangent to the question, for example, a weak account of a research study or a few undeveloped points, probably in relation to practical factors. 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 some factors affecting choice of research method. Answers may lack balance in their coverage of different factors. 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 a few influences on choice of research method, poorly linked to the question or listing different methods with limited linkage to factors.

Higher in the band, knowledge will be broader and/or deeper, and will begin to identify a more balanced and wider range of factors affecting choice of method. Material will be interpreted accurately, though at times its relevance may not be made explicit. There may be some limited analysis or evaluation, for instance, through some categorisation of factors or estimation of their degree of influence. However, this is **not** a requirement, even to reach the top of the band.

16 – 20 Answers in this band will display sound, conceptually detailed knowledge and understanding of a range of factors affecting choice of research method. 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 explicitly so as to produce a coherent and relevant answer.

Candidates will consider a full range of factors in a balanced way. Material will be drawn from practical, ethical and theoretical concerns. These may include access, time, cost, safety, informed consent, anonymity, relationship to particular research issues/groups, representativeness, validity and reliability, positivism, interpretivism, etc.

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.

<p>(f) Using material from Item B and elsewhere, assess the usefulness of different forms of secondary data in sociological research. <i>(20 marks)</i></p>

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, this may be one or two quasi-commonsensical points about data in general or some material ineffectually recycled from Item B.

Higher in the band, answers will show limited, undeveloped sociological knowledge, for example, in the form of a few insubstantial sociological points about secondary data. Analysis and 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, answers will tend to be more limited in range, offering a broadly accurate, if basic, account of probably one form of secondary data. Some less focused material may also appear, for example, lengthy, descriptive accounts of often minor issues with one or more forms of secondary data.

Higher in the band, knowledge and understanding will be largely appropriate to the demands of the question, identifying a range of strengths and weaknesses of more than one form of secondary data. Accounts of studies using secondary data will be more closely linked to the issue of usefulness. There will be some limited explicit analysis and/or evaluation, for example through some brief reference to methodological issues or weak comparison with primary data collection or between the different forms of secondary data.

16 – 20 In this band, analysis and evaluation will be explicit and relevant, and answers will show sound, conceptually detailed knowledge and understanding of sociological material drawn from Item B and elsewhere concerning the usefulness of more than one form of secondary data. This will be accurately and sensitively interpreted to meet the demands of the question. Analysis and evaluation will be explicit and relevant. The strengths and weaknesses of different forms of secondary data will be accurately identified in some detail. These may include issues such as time, cost, access, bias, degree of structure, quantitative/qualitative data, informed consent, etc.

Material drawn from Item B and reference to examples of research studies employing secondary data will be relevant, accurate and sensitively interpreted. Analysis and evaluation will be explicit and sustained, perhaps being anchored in relation to the concepts of reliability, representativeness and validity, or through linkage to methodological concerns. Explicit analysis and evaluation may also be shown through direct comparison with primary data or there may be some recognition that different forms of secondary data may be more or less appropriate for particular research purposes.

Lower in the band, answers may consider a more limited range of material or may occasionally lack focus or structure and evaluation may be less developed.

Higher in the band, interpretation will be more fully focused and evaluation more thorough, and answers may show a clear rationale in the organisation of material leading to a distinct conclusion.

ASSESSMENT GRID FOR UNIT 3 (SC3W)**Sociological Methods**

	ASSESSMENT OBJECTIVES		
Questions	AO1	AO2	Total
1 a	2	0	2
1 b	2	2	4
1 c	2	4	6
1 d	4	4	8
1 e	14	6	20
1 f	6	14	20
Total	30	30	60