



General Certificate of Education

Sociology 5191

SC3W Sociological Methods

Mark Scheme

2007 examination - June 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.

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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 METHODS

Answer **all** parts of the Question.

Total for this question: 60 marks

1 Read **Items A and B** and answer parts (a) to (f) which follow.

(a) Explain what is meant by ‘operationalise’ (**Item A**, line 5). *(2 marks)*

Two marks for an appropriate explanation or definition of ‘operationalise’ such as turning a concept into something measurable.

One mark for a partial explanation such as putting something into practice or definition by itself.

(b) Suggest **two** disadvantages of ‘**covert** participant observation’ (**Item B**, line 16). *(4 marks)*

Two marks for each of two disadvantages, such as:

- if the real research purpose is uncovered, the whole research may be jeopardised;
- physical danger;
- lack of informed consent;
- recording behaviour is difficult;
- difficult to maintain role.

(c) Suggest **three** factors, **apart from** those referred to in **Item A**, that may influence a ‘sociologist’s selection of research method’ (**Item A**, line 3). *(6 marks)*

Two marks for each of three appropriate factors.

These could include:

- cost;
- access;
- methodological/theoretical preference;
- need to gain informed consent;
- need to protect the identity of research subjects.

Note: no marks for time or research topic.

(d) Identify and briefly explain **two** disadvantages of carrying out field experiments (**Item A**).
(8 marks)

Two marks for each of two disadvantages of field experiments.

Appropriate disadvantages could include:

- difficult to identify all potential variables;
- may not be able to sustain the covert nature of the research;
- can only focus on a single type of behaviour at a time;
- inability to control all variables;
- lack of informed consent.

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

- if all potential variables cannot be identified, the researcher cannot be certain that they have uncovered the real cause and effect relationship;
- inability to sustain the covert nature of the research may result in the Hawthorne Effect;
- narrow focus means that many large-scale issues/movements cannot be studied.

(e) Examine the reasons why some sociologists use 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-commonsensual points about secondary data.

Higher in the band, answers will show a limited, undeveloped sociological knowledge, for example, two or three weak descriptive points about 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 secondary 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 some of the uses of one or more forms of 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 the characteristics of secondary data, poorly linked to the question.

Higher in the band, knowledge will be broader and/or deeper, and will begin to identify a wider range of reasons why some sociologists use secondary data. More than one form of secondary data will be considered. 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 qualitative and quantitative secondary data. However, this is **not** a requirement, even to reach the top of the band. Evaluation will begin to be closely related to the reasons identified in the answer.

16 – 20 Answers in this band will display sound, conceptually detailed knowledge and understanding of a range of reasons why some sociologists use 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 more closely related to the reasons identified in the answer.

Candidates will consider a range of reasons for using different forms of secondary data. Material may be drawn from issues of cost, time, availability, pre-categorisation, lack of researcher presence, appropriateness for particular research issues/groups, theoretical preference, representativeness, validity, reliability and ethical concerns.

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 types of interview in sociological research. (20 marks)</p>

0 No relevant points.

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

Lower in the band, this may be one or two quasi-commonsensical points about interviews 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 descriptive and undeveloped sociological points in relation to interviewing. 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 interview. Some less focused material may also appear, for example, reference to other methods or lengthy but poorly developed accounts of research studies that have employed interviews.

Higher in the band, knowledge and understanding will be largely appropriate to the demands of the question, identifying a range of advantages and disadvantages of more than one form of interview. Accounts of studies using interviews 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 other methods or between different forms of interview.

16 – 20 In this band, analysis and evaluation will be explicit and relevant, and answers will show a sound, conceptually detailed knowledge and understanding of sociological material drawn from Item B and elsewhere concerning the usefulness of more than one form of interview such as structured, unstructured and group/focus group. 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 interview will be accurately identified in some detail. These may include issues such as time, cost, access, Hawthorne Effect, informed consent, interviewer bias, degree of structure, quantitative versus qualitative data, issues relating to question design, etc.

Material drawn from Item B and reference to examples of research studies employing interviews 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 preference. Explicit analysis and evaluation may also be shown through direct comparison with alternative research methods or some recognition that different forms of interview may be more or less appropriate for particular research purposes.

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

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