



General Certificate of Education

Sociology 2191

**SCLY3 Beliefs in Society;
Global Development;
Mass Media;
Power and Politics**

Report on the Examination

2011 examination – January series

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SCLY3

General

The overall standard by and large was good, with many candidates achieving more than 50 raw marks out of 60 for the paper. Conversely, there remains a small but significant minority whose performance would seem to indicate that they were inadequately prepared. Such candidates were affected by factors such as:

- poor time management, with excessive time being taken over the 'Identify and briefly explain' questions leading to unnecessary length. This is an issue in at least half of scripts, though its impact obviously varies.
- misunderstanding the question
- failure to address the question set, either in part or as a whole
- 'knowledge-driven' responses that failed to use material selectively, or failed to demonstrate AO2 skills to an appropriate level
- poor knowledge, possibly due to lack of revision
- an over-reliance on dated material and/or an inability to adduce contemporary evidence.

Section A – Beliefs in Society

Question 01

Many candidates scored well on this question. The most common responses focused on the growth of new religious movements, alternative activities to churchgoing, believing but not belonging, the loss of status of the Church in modern day society, the Church of England seeming old-fashioned or dated and the disaffection of young people.

Unfortunately it was still common to find points identified that were not subsequently explained or explanations that were hidden in lengthy descriptive responses. Similarly, a few candidates lost marks by failing to observe the 'apart from lower church attendance' instruction, or by failing to reference the Church of England, such responses generally being set in a 'decline of religion' framework.

Question 02

Most answers focused on the growth of alternative religious or spiritual organisations, taking the decline of the Church of England as read. Better answers looked at both aspects and also took a wider remit to include consideration of factors such as ethnicity, age, the changing nature of belief, social class and concepts such as spiritual shopping. Only a minority questioned whether or not the Church of England was declining and challenged some of the available evidence. Some candidates wrote mostly about the appeal and growth of sects which limited the mark they could achieve.

Question 03

This question was the less popular of the two 33-mark questions on beliefs. However, some candidates answered it very well, focusing on a range of different ethnic groups and considering a range of reasons for joining or not joining different religious groups. Weaker candidates tended to deal with ethnic groups as a single entity and locate their answer in a discussion about the problems faced by immigrants.

Question 04

This was the more popular of the two 33-mark questions on beliefs. Many saw it as an opportunity to present an answer based on recounting two or more perspectives, usually drawn from Marxism, functionalism, neo-Marxism and feminism. Many answers showed great knowledge and understanding of the different perspectives and provided analytical detail on each one. However, less able candidates provided answers that showed flaws or omissions in various aspects. For example, the concepts of stability and conflict were rarely challenged or even examined. Similarly, many assumed quite simply, and wrongly, that conflict theories must see religion as causing conflict. As a result erroneous conclusions were often drawn from consideration of Marxist and/or feminist views. Some candidates seem to think that fundamentalism is a new sociological perspective.

Disappointingly, apart from in some of the best answers, the range and detail of empirical work offered was limited. Examples from the Middle East and Northern Ireland were often mentioned, but rarely examined beyond a statement that religion seemed to be the cause of conflict. The notion that conflicts may have other causes did not seem to occur to most candidates. Thus many wrote lengthy answers but failed to gain high marks as their analyses and evaluation were partially flawed or lacking development.

Section B: Global Development

Question 05

This question was well answered by many candidates. The most common responses focused on the impact of development on family life, communities, language, work patterns and economic values. Some candidates missed opportunities to score as they gave answers that were not related to the disruption of traditional cultures, but focused, for instance, purely on economic changes.

Question 06

Most candidates responded to this question by offering a theoretical framework based on modernisation versus dependency theories. This was often supported by fairly recent empirical examples, such as the growth of the Asian tigers. Many saw the giving of aid, in particular tied aid, as a problem along with the growth of debt. However, many answers became descriptive rather than analytical and did not explore the notion and motivation of countries 'deliberately' keeping the poor countries poor.

Question 07

This was a popular question, and often well answered. The majority of candidates focused more on aid than trade, but were often thorough in their treatment of the issues and showed considerable understanding. Better answers produced a more balanced response and cited recent empirical examples together with the usual range of perspectives on development.

Question 08

Responses to this question were divided between those who were conversant with the relevant theoretical material and those who had perhaps heard of Malthus but knew less of other perspectives on population. In the latter cases answers tended to provide some commonsensical observations on population growth, but little in terms of focused analysis and evaluation. Some answers made little reference to 'the world today'.

Better answers explored the ways in which thinking on population issues has changed over the past century and evaluated the various views expressed.

Section C: Mass Media

Question 09

This question was well answered by many candidates. The most popular responses identified the portrayal of the disabled as victims, villains or dependent as common stereotypes. Sexuality was seen as stereotyped where, for example, lesbians were portrayed as 'butch' or gay men as effeminate.

Question 10

This question set up a debate about which most candidates should have known a great deal from their own personal experience. However, although there were one or two excellent answers, many struggled to go beyond the assertion made in the question. In such cases there was usually an attempt to provide two or three examples of media usage but the range and diversity of media sources and outlets were rarely explored. Many presented a stereotyped version of reality, with parents watching television and reading newspapers while the children played on their computers or texted on their phones. Subtle differences of usage were drawn out only by the very best candidates. Similarly, the changes that the media have facilitated to social life, networking, politics, consumerism, leisure and communication were only occasionally evident in answers.

Question 11

This question was attempted by the majority of media candidates. It was usually well done and sometimes very well done. In most responses the pluralist arguments were examined and then contrasted with Marxist and/or neo-Marxist perspectives. A feature of many answers was a very sound understanding of the perspectives but a disappointing lack of up-to-date examples with which to illustrate these answers.

Question 12

Globalisation has been a major issue for some time and many candidates clearly relished the opportunity to discuss it in the context of the mass media. However, few candidates addressed both aspects of the question. The most common responses talked of structure, citing media mergers, vertical and horizontal integration and the dangers of media concentration of ownership. As a result, in some answers there was a tendency to stray too far into an answer simply on ownership and control. As with some other questions on this paper, many responses lacked a range of empirical material to respond to the question.

Section D: Power and Politics

Question 13

The points identified most often were the growth of the internet, the emergence of supra-state bodies, political agendas needing a global stage, the movement of people around the world and the changing nature of politics and political action. This question was usually well answered, though some candidates did not fully explain points made, or chose points that had a high degree of overlap.

Question 14

Most candidates responded to this question quite well, using Hallsworth as a starting point and going on to discuss the growth and role of different social movements. More successful answers discussed how such events were part of the changing nature of politics and political action. Weaker answers tended to drift into a response on different kinds of pressure groups.

Question 15

The response to this question was disappointing. Given the range of materials available to candidates on the topic of voting behaviour in recent elections it was a pity to see so many answers locked into studies from the 1960s. While these might have some relevance for background, they could not be enough in themselves for a full answer. Knowledge and understanding of recent elections was mostly fairly vague or non-existent. Elections at different levels, such as European, local, General, etc were rarely discussed. Given that the United Kingdom General Election was only months ago it was surprising to see so few mentions of anything to do with it. Similarly, issues such as nationalism were rarely touched upon.

Question 16

This was the more popular of the two 33-mark questions in this section. The strength of many answers was a very good understanding of a range of different theories of power, usually including Marxist, pluralist, elitist and feminist views. A weakness in some answers was a failure to address the question fully, thus dealing only with one aspect of power. Another weakness was the absence of empirical material to be used to develop or illustrate points made. Many weaker answers appeared in a fairly timeless and stateless vacuum.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the [Results statistics](#) page of the AQA Website.