

UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE INTERNATIONAL EXAMINATIONS
GCE Advanced Subsidiary Level and GCE Advanced Level

**MARK SCHEME for the October/November 2011 question paper
for the guidance of teachers**

9699 SOCIOLOGY

9699/12

Paper 1 (Essay), maximum raw mark 50

This mark scheme is published as an aid to teachers and candidates, to indicate the requirements of the examination. It shows the basis on which Examiners were instructed to award marks. It does not indicate the details of the discussions that took place at an Examiners' meeting before marking began, which would have considered the acceptability of alternative answers.

Mark schemes must be read in conjunction with the question papers and the report on the examination.

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Section A: The Sociological Perspective

1 "Ideology is the most important factor in explaining social order." Explain and assess this claim. [25]

- (0–6) An answer that is confined to a few simple assertions about social order would fit the lower part of the band. Higher in the band, there may be some limited attempt to define the term 'ideology'.
- (7–12) A basic account of one sociological theory (functionalist, Marxist, feminist, interactionist) of how social order is created would fit the bottom of the band. A basic descriptive account of two or more theories of social order, with little or no direct linkage to the concept of ideology, would trigger the upper part of the band.
- (13–18) A good descriptive account of two or more theories of social order, with few explicit links to the concept of ideology, would fit the bottom of the band. To go higher, there has to be an attempt to assess the claim that ideology is the most important factor in explaining social order. One way the assessment may be delivered within this band is through juxtaposing, for example, the Marxist and functionalist accounts of social order, noting key differences between the two theories.
- (19–25) Answers at this level will demonstrate a clear understanding of the Marxist notion that ideology is a key factor in explaining social order. Higher in the band, different strands of Marxist theory may be considered. There will also be a sustained and explicit analysis of the strengths and/or limitations of Marxist theory in relation to the question. Answers that merit the top half of the band are likely to be distinguished by consideration of a good range of factors that may play a part in creating social order and show clear understanding of the differences between the main theoretical perspectives (Marxist, functionalist, interactionist).

2 "Interpretivist approaches to the study of society have more strengths than limitations." Explain and assess this view. [25]

- (0–6) An answer that is limited to a few simple points about sociological theory in general would fit the lower half of the band. A marginally better answer at this level would contain a few broadly accurate references to the interpretivist perspective specifically, though without coherent development in the context of the question.
- (7–12) A simple descriptive account of the main features of the interpretivist perspective would fit the lower part of the band. A more accurate and developed account would move into the higher part of the band. It is not necessary to distinguish between different strands of interpretivism (phenomenology, ethnomethodology, symbolic interactionism) at this level.
- (13–18) At the bottom of the band, the bulk of the answer may consist of a descriptive account of the interpretivist perspective with perhaps a contrast drawn with positivism. Higher in the band, there will be an attempt to assess the strengths and limitations of the interpretivist approach to the study of society, though the analysis may lack depth and the range of points covered will be limited.
- (19–25) Answers at this level will demonstrate a good understanding of the interpretivist perspective and provide a sustained assessment of its strengths and limitations. Higher in the band, sophistication may be demonstrated by, for example, distinguishing between different strands of interpretivism or by making good use of references to appropriate interpretivist studies to illustrate the value or otherwise of the approach.

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Section B: Sociological Methods

3 "Quantitative research methods have more strengths and fewer limitations than qualitative research methods." Explain and assess this claim. [25]

- (0–6) A few general points about sociological research methods, with little or no linkage to the question, would merit a mark at the lower end of the band. Higher in the band, there will be some evidence that the candidate understands the distinction between quantitative and qualitative research methods, but the answer will lack development and fail to address the issues raised by the question.
- (7–12) Answers that demonstrate a sound understanding of the distinction between quantitative and qualitative research methods would merit the lower part of the band, even though they may fail to address the specific issues raised by the question. Higher in the band, however, there will be an attempt to explain why it might be thought that quantitative research methods are superior to qualitative research methods. Answers that consider the strengths and limitations of just one specific quantitative research method may score no more than ten marks.
- (13–18) Answers at this level will demonstrate a good understanding of the strengths of quantitative research methods relative to qualitative methods. Higher in the band, the claim on which the question is based will be assessed, though at this level the analysis may rely primarily on a juxtaposition of the respective strengths and limitations of quantitative and qualitative research. Reward candidates who make good use of references to relevant studies to support their answers. Answers that focus only on the strengths and limitations of particular quantitative methods (questionnaires, structured interviews, experiments), and fail to assess the value of quantitative research overall, may achieve no more than fifteen marks.
- (19–25) Answers at this level will show a good understanding of relevant concepts (validity, reliability, objectivity, value freedom, representativeness) in relation to the question. The assessment of quantitative research methods will be sustained and well formulated. Higher in the band, we might expect candidates to recognise that claims for one methodological approach being superior to another are problematical on a number of counts. Good answers at this level may also make appropriate links between quantitative/qualitative approaches and the positivist/interpretivist perspectives.

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4 "With the exception of official statistics, most secondary data is too subjective to be of use in sociological research." Explain and assess this claim. [25]

- (0–6) A few simple points about secondary data in general may be worth two or three marks. A basic attempt to distinguish between different types of secondary data would fit the top half of the band.
- (7–12) At the lower end of the band, answers may be limited to a few general points about the strengths and/or limitations of secondary data in general. Better responses at this level will distinguish between official statistics and other forms of secondary data. There will also be an attempt to explain the view expressed in the question, though this may lack some detail and clarity.
- (13–18) Answers falling within this band will provide a clear and accurate explanation of why it might be thought that official statistics provide an objective source of information while other forms of secondary data are too subjective to be useful in sociological research. Higher in the band, the view expressed in the question will be assessed, though the analysis may lack depth. Candidates who question the notion that official statistics are an objective source of data are likely to trigger the top part of this band, at the very least.
- (19–25) As for the top of the previous band, though the assessment will be wider-ranging and/or more incisive. A variety of sources of secondary data will be considered and the strengths and limitations of each source will be discussed in relation to the issues of objectivity/subjectivity raised by the question. Answers that merit the top of the band will question thoroughly both the idea that official statistics avoid the problems of subjectivity associated with other types of data **and** the view that other sources of secondary data are too subjective to be useful in sociological research.

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Section C: Social Differentiation and Stratification

5 "Everyone has an equal chance of achieving high social status and reward in modern industrial societies." Explain and assess this claim. [25]

- (0–6) Answers that are confined to a few simple observations about inequality or the class system may fit this band. If this includes some evidence of relevant sociological knowledge rather than just common-sense references, a mark at the top of the band may be justified.
- (7–12) There will be a relevant sociological context to answers at this level. At the most simple level this may be couched in terms of comparing the concepts of achieved and ascribed status. Higher in the band, we should look for more developed answers that consider the influence of factors such as social class, gender and ethnicity in shaping life chances.
- (13–18) Answers at this level may be based on an appropriate theoretical structure, and references to functionalism and the meritocracy thesis would be particularly relevant. Empirical evidence may also be used to develop the discussion; for example, references to the findings from social mobility studies could be used to very good effect. Higher in the band, the claim on which the question is based will be assessed, though the analysis may be confined to simple juxtaposition of different theories of social stratification.
- (19–25) At this level the discussion will be sophisticated in terms of theory and/or the empirical evidence used. There will be a concerted attempt to assess the claim that everyone has an equal chance of achieving high social status and reward in modern industrial societies. Higher in the band, the assessment will make clear the complexity of the issues raised by the question and develop conclusions that draw on a good range of relevant sociological knowledge and understanding. The post-modernist contribution to discussing life chances and social inequality may be put to good use in answers that trigger the top of the band.

6 "Marxist theory is of little use in understanding social class divisions today." Explain and assess this view. [25]

- (0–6) Answers that are confined to a few observations about social class divisions may fit the lower half of the band. If there is also some rudimentary comment about Marxist theory, a mark at the top of the band may be justified.
- (7–12) A basic account of the Marxist theory of class would merit the lower part of the band. If this were supplemented by a discussion of at least one other theory of class, a mark at the top of the band may be justified. At this level there will be little or no attempt to explain or assess the statement on which the question is based.
- (13–18) Answers at this level will move beyond a descriptive account of the Marxist theory of class, to explain why that theory might be considered to be of little use in understanding social class divisions today. If the answer also contains some relevant assessment, albeit at a basic level, a mark at the top of the band may be justified.
- (19–25) As for the previous band, though the assessment will be more developed and incisive. The assessment may be based on a mix of theoretical argument and empirical evidence, with useful references to contemporary developments such as the disappearance of the traditional working class and the increasing influence of consumerism in the formation of social identities. A clear and well-supported conclusion will emerge, especially in answers at the top of the band.