

OXFORD CAMBRIDGE AND RSA EXAMINATIONS
Advanced Subsidiary GCE

SOCIOLOGY

Sociological Research Skills

REVISED SPECIMEN PAPER JUNE 2002 ONWARDS

2534

Additional materials:

8 page Answer Book

4 page continuation Answer Book

TIME 1 hour

INSTRUCTIONS TO CANDIDATES

- Write your name, Centre number and Candidate number in the spaces provided on the answer book.
- Answer all parts of the question.
- Read each question carefully and make sure you know what you have to do before starting your answer.

INFORMATION FOR CANDIDATES

- The number of marks is given in brackets [] at the end of each question or part question.
- The total number of marks for this paper is **60**.
- You will be awarded marks for the quality of written communication where an answer requires a piece of extended writing.

This specimen paper consists of 2 printed pages.

Study Item A and Item B carefully, then answer **all parts of the question (a) to (d)**. You should spend approximately **30 minutes** answering parts (a), (b) and (c) and approximately **30 minutes** answering part (d).

ITEM A

Examination achievements of pupils in school: by gender, 1998

<i>England and Wales</i>		<i>Percentages achieving various GCSE grades</i>			
	5+ grades A*–C (%)	1–4 grades A*–C (%)	Grades D–G (%)	No grades (%)	TOTAL (%)
Males	42	25	26	7	100
Females	51	26	17	6	100

(Adapted from *Social Trends*, 2000)

ITEM B

You have been asked to assess a research design concerned with the underachievement of boys at GCSE level. The research design consists of:

- Selecting a sample of two inner city secondary schools and two secondary schools in rural areas;
- Analysing the published GCSE results of males and females in the sample schools over the previous ten years;
- Interviewing teachers in the sample schools and asking them to compare the motivation of boys and girls;
- Observing the behaviour of males and females in classes during the summer term leading up to the GCSE examinations.

QUESTIONS

- 1 (a) Briefly explain the concept of 'generalisation'. [6]
- (b) Using **Item A**, identify **two** main differences in the pattern of achievement between boys and girls. [8]
- (c) Using **Item B**, identify and explain **one** strength and **one** weakness of the research design. [16]
- (d) Outline and assess **one** sociological research method of collecting information about boys' attitudes to homework. [30]

[Total : 60 marks]

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MARK SCHEME

GENERAL MARKING GUIDELINES

It is important to remember that the Advanced Subsidiary GCE is assessed at a standard appropriate for candidates who have completed the first half of a full Advanced GCE course i.e. between GCSE and Advanced GCE. Candidates will mainly be 17 years old writing under examination conditions. Before you begin marking it is strongly recommended that you examine the Advanced Subsidiary Assessment Matrix on page 59 of the Specifications in order to obtain a feel for the general qualities we are seeking at this level. The mark scheme for each unit gives more detailed guidance on the possible responses to each question.

Marking must be positive. Candidates should not be penalised for errors, inaccuracies or irrelevancies. Credit should be given for what is there rather than what you think should be there. Credit should also be given for responses which take an unusual approach not covered by the mark scheme, which are judged to be valid alternatives. The Assessment Matrix on page 59 of the Specifications should be used to mark such responses. Please consult your team leader if necessary for further guidance.

Marks for quality of written communication are embedded with the AO1 criteria. Answers to all questions should be written in continuous prose and will be assessed according to clarity of expression and presentation, taking account of grammar, punctuation and spelling.

It is extremely important that the whole range of marks be used in order to differentiate between candidates. Full marks should be awarded for responses which are the best that can be reasonably expected of AS candidates who have completed one year of study. A perfect answer is not required. If the candidate's response to a question is such that the mark scheme allows full marks to be awarded, full marks must be given. If a candidate's answer does not deserve any credit, no marks should be awarded.

Study Item A and Item B carefully, then answer all parts of the question (a) to (d).

ITEM A

Examination achievements of pupils in school: by gender 1998

England and Wales

Percentages achieving various GCSE grades

	5 grades A*-C (%)	1 - 4 grades A*-C (%)	Grades D - G (%)	No grades (%)	TOTAL (%)
Males	42	25	26	7	100
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(Adapted from Social Trends 2000)

ITEM B

You have been asked to assess a research design concerned with the under-achievement of boys at GCSE level. The research design consists of:

- Selecting a sample of two inner city secondary schools and two secondary schools in rural areas;
- Analysing the published GCSE results of males and females in the sample schools over the previous ten years;
- Interviewing teachers in the sample schools and asking them to compare the motivation of boys and girls;
- Observing the behaviour of males and females in classes during the summer term leading up to the GCSE examinations.

(a) Briefly explain the concept of 'generalisation'

[6]

AO1 Knowledge and Understanding (inc. Presentation and Communication)

[4-6] Candidate's explanation displays clear knowledge and understanding of the concept of 'generalisation'. At the top of this level answers will probably refer to the idea of sampling. The term 'generalisation' means being able to draw a conclusion about the whole population being studied on the basis of actually only studying the sample. Some answers may clarify an understanding of these points via clear examples, such as those related to survey samples, or case-study samples. Responses will directly address the question. At the bottom of this level, responses are likely to display an awareness of the core meaning of the term but may include material that confuses some aspect of generalisation. There will be few, if any, errors of grammar, punctuation or spelling.

[1-3] Knowledge and understanding of the term 'generalisation' will be partial. Typically this may be a confused account of generalisation with a weak example. There should be at least some sense that 'generalisation' is partially understood. At the bottom of this level answers will display an awareness of at least one aspect of the term but will almost certainly include irrelevant material. There may be some errors of grammar, punctuation and spelling.

[0] No relevant points.

- (b) Using Item A, identify **two** main differences in the pattern of achievement between boys and girls. [8]

AO2a Interpretation and Analysis

[7-8] Answers will show the ability to select accurately and analyse the data in **Item A** in order to identify **two** main differences in the pattern of achievement between boys and girls. The main differences are;

- Females achieve a higher percentage of top grades (5 + grades at A *-C)
- Males achieve a higher percentage of grades D-G

Award full marks to responses that clearly identify the **two** points listed above. Candidates who identify the two main differences, but express their answer in absolute numbers, rather than as a percentage/proportion should be located at the bottom of this band.

[5-6] Answers will show the ability to select and analyse data in **Item A** in order to identify clearly at least **one** main difference in the pattern of achievement between boys and girls. The second difference may be less clearly expressed or the difference may not be the main difference, e.g. a higher percentage of females achieve 1-4 A*-C GCSE grades; a higher percentage of boys do not gain any GCSE grades. Answers which correctly identify two differences but in a very generalised way should be placed at the bottom of this band.

[3-4] Answers will display some ability to interpret the data in **Item A**. Responses in this band will identify only **one** main difference without any accurate reference to a second. At the bottom of this band answers may begin to describe rather than interpret the data.

[1-2] Answers will display a limited ability to interpret the data in **Item A**. Only minor differences may be identified. Award 1 mark for the identification of one minor difference. There will be a tendency to describe the data indiscriminately rather than answer the question.

[0] No relevant points.

- (c) Using Item B, identify and explain *one* strength and *one* weakness of the research design. [16]

AO1 Knowledge and Understanding (inc. Presentation and Understanding)

[7-8] Answers will explicitly focus on **one** strength and **one** weakness. Explanations should demonstrate an accurate, clear and conceptually detailed knowledge and understanding of how a strength and weakness contribute to or undermine the research process.

Strengths:

- Data triangulation or method triangulation (although detailed and knowledgeable discussion of the merits of observations and interviews is also acceptable).
- The small scale of the sample allowing for a case study approach.
- The fact that the deliberately limited nature of the schools selected limits the number of possible confounding variables.
- Or any other reasonable response.

Weaknesses:

- The representativeness of the sample;
- Confidentiality issues in terms of data supplied by teachers.
- Problems with relying on teacher accounts of pupils' motivation.
- Weaknesses in official statistics
- Difficulties in managing the observation process, in their last ever term at school.
- Access to schools and local statistics.
- Or any other reasonable response.

In this band, the candidate will present material in a way that directly addresses the question. There will be few, if any, errors of grammar, punctuation and spelling.

[5-6] The candidate will identify one issue relating to **one** strength and **one** weakness of the research design, but their explanation, although reasonably accurate and clear, will lack depth and detail or the candidate will focus on only **one** strength *or* **one** weakness in an accurate, clear and conceptually detailed fashion but references to another strength or weakness may be under-developed. The candidate will present material in a manner, which addresses the question. There may be occasional errors of spelling, punctuation and grammar.

[3-4] Responses will demonstrate basic knowledge and understanding of **one** strength *or* **one** weakness of the research design either by focusing on **one** strength *or* **one** weakness in a superficial fashion or by engaging in a generalised explanation of strengths and weaknesses which is only partially accurate and lacking in clarity. Answers that identify **one** strength *and* **one** weakness but in an extremely superficial way cannot be located at the top of this band. The candidate will present material, which partially addresses the question. There may be some errors of spelling, punctuation and grammar.

[1-2] Answers will demonstrate a limited knowledge and understanding of **one** strength *or* **one** weakness of the research design. The candidate will present material of marginal relevance. Errors of grammar, punctuation and spelling may be noticeable and intrusive.

[0] No relevant points

AO2 (a) Interpretation and Analysis

[7-8] Responses display the ability to select appropriate elements from the research design for analysis in terms of clearly and accurately picking out **one** strength *and* **one** weakness for analysis from **Item B**. In order to be located in this band answers must clearly and accurately explain *how* one feature of the research design could be regarded as a strength or a weakness. Answers at this level must elaborate in some detail on *how*, for example observing students in their final terms at school could be a design weakness. Analysis could include referring to how the use of official statistics may impact upon the validity of the data or *how* unreliable methods of teacher interviews could be.

[5-6] Responses display the ability to select and analyse **one** strengths and **one** weakness of the research design but analysis of these, whilst accurate and sociologically focused, may lack depth and detail or the candidate will select **one** strength *or* **one** weakness and subject them to accurate and sociological analysis.

[3-4] At the top of this band, responses display some basic ability to select **one** strength and **one** weakness, but analysis is generalised and only partially accurate. At the bottom of this band, responses will select **one** strength *or* **one** weakness of the research design and analyse it in a superficial fashion.

[1-2] Responses display a limited ability to select from appropriate elements of the research design to analyse in terms of either one strength or one weakness.

[0] No relevant points.

- (d) Outline and assess one sociological research method of collecting data about boys' attitudes to homework. [30]

AO1 Knowledge and Understanding (inc. Presentation and Communication)

[15-18] Answers display a range of knowledge and understanding of **one** research method of data collection likely to achieve the required aims and objectives given in the question. There should be a clear link established between the data collection technique (the most appropriate being questionnaires / interviews / possibly, weekly diaries) and the context of the research i.e. boys' attitudes to homework. **Answers that build their responses around the context will be a hallmark of those located in this band.** Responses should elaborate on how their chosen method of data collection relates to the wider research issues such as, operationalisation, representativeness, sample size and access to a sample of school-aged boys, response rates, the reliability and validity of their chosen method of data collection, the relationship between the researcher and those being researched. Answers need not cover all of these issues but in referring to some of these and other issues they display a sound knowledge and understanding of the technicalities of research techniques and concepts associated with research. The candidate will present material in a way that directly addresses the question. There will be few, if any, errors of grammar, punctuation and spelling.

[10-14] Answers display knowledge and understanding of **one** research method by identifying and outlining one appropriate method likely to achieve the aims and objectives of the required research task given in the question. There should be some sense of the link between the chosen method of data collection within the context of the research task, although this is likely to be less well developed than in the band above. Answers in the middle and bottom of this band are likely to be characterised by displaying a reasonably sound technical knowledge of research methods and concepts associated with research but need to develop greater understanding of the specific requirements of the given task. The candidate will present material in a way which addresses the question. There may be occasional errors of grammar, punctuation and spelling.

[5-9] Answers display some knowledge and understanding of **one** research method by identifying and outlining one method of data collection. The chosen method may have some potential in achieving the aims and objectives of the given research task. The hallmark of answers in this band will be mostly rehearsed and generalised accounts of research methods. There may be some reference to one or two concepts but they will tend to be in need of greater clarification. Answers at the bottom of this band may be detached from the specific requirements of the research task. The candidate will present material, which partially addresses the question. There may be some errors of grammar, punctuation and spelling.

[1-4] Responses in this band will demonstrate an awareness of **one** method of data collection. At the bottom of this band there is likely to be a weak description of a single method with only a superficial recognition of the demands of the research task. Knowledge and understanding of concepts associated with research will be extremely weak. The candidate will present material of marginal relevance. Errors of grammar, punctuation and spelling may be noticeable and intrusive.

[0] No relevant points

AO2b Evaluation

[10-12] Answers explicitly evaluate a variety of the features of their chosen method of data collection. Responses located in this band should evaluate the effectiveness of the data collection technique in achieving its aims. Answers at the top of this band will develop a sustained assessment of the method in relation to the specific task. Reward references that suggest the need to adopt more than one method in the interests of validity and reliability. Some answers will focus on a smaller range of issues in depth whilst others may cover a more comprehensive range. In either case there must be evidence of the candidate expressing a judgement on the effectiveness of their chosen method of data collection in relation to issues of reliability, validity, representativeness and generalisability. Ethical issues may also be identified in terms of how they may impact upon the method of data collection.

[7-9] Answers identify and develop some points of evaluation in relation to reliability, validity, representativeness and/or ethics. Some comment may be included in relation to how effective the chosen method of data collection may be in achieving its aims. Answers in this band will be less well developed at sustaining an assessment of the data collection technique. At the bottom of this band there will probably be a tendency towards general commentary, rather than an assessment of the issues related specifically to the research task. Answers should express a judgement on how effective the method may be in relation to at least one of the issues of reliability, validity, representativeness or generalisability.

[4-6] Answers offer a basic commentary on a narrow range of predominantly practical issues related to general issues of data collection. Commentary will probably not be related to issues of reliability, validity, representativeness or generalisability. Typically this may be a short list of potential strengths and weaknesses left undeveloped and disconnected to the specific research task.

[1-3] Answers offer one or two comments, which relate to the chosen method of data collection. At this level the commentary will be limited and probably related to general issues of collecting data.

[0] No relevant points.

Total: [60]

ASSESSMENT MATRIX: ADVANCED SUBSIDIARY

This assessment matrix underpins the marking schemes for units 2532, 2533, 2534 and 2535. This ensures consistency of standard between these units and clear progression to A2.

		ASSESSMENT OBJECTIVE 1		ASSESSMENT OBJECTIVE 2	
		Knowledge and Understanding (inc. Presentation and Communication)		Interpretation and Analysis	
Levels of Achievement				Evaluation	
4		<p>Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the theories, methods, concepts and various forms of evidence and of the links between them, as outlined in photographs 3.3 (a), (b) and (c) of the Subject Criteria*.</p> <p>The candidate will show a range of knowledge and understanding of selected aspects of social life, and of the relevant concepts, theories and methods employed in sociology. The candidate will present material in a way which directly addresses the question. There will be few, if any, errors of grammar, punctuation and spelling.</p>		<p>The candidate will display the ability to select and analyse different types of data.</p> <p>The candidate will show the ability to select from and appropriately interpret different types of data.</p> <p>The candidate will show the ability to evaluate specific sociological arguments based on the available evidence, methods and explanations.</p>	
3		<p>The candidate will display knowledge and understanding of selected aspects of social life and of the relevant sociological concepts, theories and methods. The candidate will present material in a manner which addresses the question. There may be occasional errors of grammar, punctuation and spelling.</p>		<p>The candidate will show the ability to select from and appropriately interpret different types of data.</p> <p>The candidate will show the ability to evaluate some of the points to be derived from the available methods and evidence.</p>	
2		<p>The candidate will display some knowledge of selected aspects of social life, and of relevant concepts, theories and methods. The candidate will present material which partially addresses the question. There may be some errors of grammar, punctuation and spelling.</p>		<p>The candidate will display some ability to interpret different types of data.</p> <p>The candidate will show the ability to make a basic evaluation of evidence and argument</p>	
1		<p>The candidate will display an awareness of at least one aspect of social life and/or one relevant concept, theory or method. The candidate will present material of marginal relevance. Errors of grammar, punctuation and spelling may be noticeable and intrusive.</p>		<p>The candidate will display limited ability to respond to data.</p> <p>The candidate will be aware of at least one issue involved in evaluation.</p>	

