

**OXFORD CAMBRIDGE AND RSA EXAMINATIONS**  
**Advanced Subsidiary GCE**

**SOCIOLOGY**

Applied Sociological Research Skills

**REVISED SPECIMEN PAPER JUNE 2002 ONWARDS**

**2537**

Additional materials:

16 page Answer Book

4 page continuation Answer Book

**TIME** 1 hour 30 minutes

**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 the whole question paper carefully to 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 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.

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**This specimen paper consists of 2 printed pages.**

Answer **all** parts (a) to (e). You are advised to spend approximately **30 minutes** on Question 1, parts (a)-(c), and **one hour** on parts (d) and (e).

Study **Item A** carefully, then answer parts (a), (b) and (c).

### ITEM A

Sociological surveys of religious belief based on questionnaires have concluded that religion in the UK is characterised by believing without belonging. They also suggest that for many people, church attendance may be a matter of belonging without believing. Timms (1992), for example, found that 71% of his survey sample believed in God, 53% believed in heaven but only 25% believed in hell. However, few of these people regularly attended church.

Other sociologists rely on the official statistics collected by church organisations themselves in regard to attendance and membership. The sociological analysis of such statistics suggests that there has been a noticeable decline in church attendance in the UK over the past thirty years, with the exception of Northern Ireland. Only 8.2% of the population attend church on a weekly basis, although Afro-Caribbean and Islamic congregations are increasing. However, the reliability of these church statistics has been questioned because different religions define attendance and membership in different ways.

- (a) Using only **Item A**, identify **two** reasons why sociologists have questioned the reliability of church attendance statistics. **[6]**
- (b) Identify and explain **two** strengths of the postal questionnaire when researching attitudes and beliefs. **[8]**
- (c) Summarise what the research findings in **Item A** tell us about religious practices and beliefs in Britain. **[10]**

Study **Item B** carefully, then answer parts (d) and (e).

### ITEM B

The Telegraph newspaper requires qualitative data to discover whether the elderly have a greater commitment to religious belief and practice than the young. You have been asked, as a sociological researcher, to design a proposal which will target a representative sample of **both** the elderly and the young.

- (d) Outline and explain the research process you would adopt in collecting qualitative data on the religious beliefs and practices of the elderly and the young. **[14]**
- (e) Assess the potential weaknesses of your research proposal, briefly explaining how you intend to overcome them. **[22]**

**[Total : 60 marks]**

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**Advanced GCE**

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MARK SCHEME

- 1 (a) Using only Item A, identify two reasons why sociologists have questioned the reliability of church attendance statistics.

[6]

*AO2 (a) : Interpretation and Analysis*

[4-6] Using Item A, the candidate shows the ability to clearly identify two reasons why sociologists have questioned the reliability of church attendance statistics. The candidate may focus on any two reasons from: 'belonging without believing', going to church for social rather than religious reasons; the fact that different religions define attendance in different ways. At the bottom of this level, one reason may be more clearly identified than the other.

[1-3] Using Item A, the candidate will display some ability to identify the reasons why sociologists have questioned the reliability of church attendance. At the bottom of this level, it is likely that responses will be only partially accurate

[0] No relevant sociological points.

- (b) Identify and explain two strengths of the postal questionnaire when researching attitudes and beliefs.

[8]

*AO1 : Knowledge and Understanding*

[7-8] The candidate clearly shows knowledge and understanding of **two** strengths of the postal questionnaire in researching attitudes and beliefs. Two relevant strengths – e.g. the anonymity and confidentiality of the questionnaire may produce more valid data in terms of honesty especially about 'deviant' attitudes and beliefs than face-to-face research; it allows the respondent to be more reflective about how he or she feels; it may reduce the potential problems caused by interview bias such as the social desirability effect, etc. – are clearly explained. 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 displays knowledge and understanding of two strengths of the postal questionnaire in researching attitudes and beliefs, although the relevance of one strength may be more clearly explained than the other. The candidate will present material in a manner which addresses the question. There may be errors of grammar, punctuation and spelling.

[3-4] The candidate will display some knowledge of postal questionnaires, but the response may only partially address the question in terms of strengths relating to attitudes and beliefs. There may be some errors of grammar, punctuation and spelling.

[1-2] The candidate will display an awareness of postal questionnaires, but the material presented is only of marginal relevance in terms of strengths and/or attitudes and beliefs. Errors of grammar, punctuation and spelling may be noticeable and intrusive.

**0 marks**

No relevant sociological points.

- (c) Summarise what the research findings in Item A tell us about religious practices and beliefs in Britain. [10]

*AO2 (a) : Interpretation and Analysis*

**[8-10]** The candidate shows the ability to select from, and summarise, what the research findings in Item A tell us about religious practices and beliefs in Britain in a comprehensive and accurate fashion. Candidate may focus, for example, on: believing without belonging, the contradictory nature of religious belief, belonging without believing, the long term decline in UK church attendance with the exception of Northern Ireland, the 8.2% weekly UK church attendance and the increase in Afro-Caribbean and Islamic religious activity.

**[6-7]** The candidate shows the ability to select from and summarise a range of the data in Item A in a comprehensive and accurate fashion.

**[4-5]** The candidate displays some ability to select and summarise the data in Item A in a reasonably accurate fashion.

**[1-3]** The candidate displays limited ability to select and summarise the data in Item A. Candidates whose summary only includes one relevant fact from Item A will be unable to achieve above this level.

**[0]** No relevant sociological points.

The Telegraph newspaper requires qualitative data to discover whether the elderly have a greater commitment to religious belief and practice than the young. You have been asked, as a sociological researcher, to design a proposal which will target a representative sample of both the elderly and the young.

- (d) Outline and explain the research process you would adopt in collecting qualitative data on the religious beliefs and practices of the elderly and the young.

[14]

*AO1 : Knowledge and Understanding*

**[4-6]** The candidate will display good knowledge and understanding of the research process necessary for a research proposal investigating how committed a representative sample of the elderly and the young are towards religious belief and practice. The candidate will demonstrate knowledge of the qualitative research method(s) chosen in relation to the research context and/or the sampling procedures to choose a sample of the elderly and young. Candidates at the top of this level will have made some accurate reference to how religious commitment may be operationalised. 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.

**[1-3]** The candidate will display some knowledge of selected aspects of the research process necessary for a research proposal investigating how committed a representative sample of the elderly and the young are towards religious belief and practice. The candidate will demonstrate a basic and limited knowledge of the qualitative research method(s) required to collect this information and will present material which only partially addresses the research context. There may be some errors of grammar, punctuation and spelling. At the bottom of the level, the material will be of marginal relevance to the research context.

**[0]** No relevant sociological points.

*AO2 (b) : Evaluation*

**[7-8]** The candidate will show the ability to explain why they have used the specific research method(s) and clearly rationalises the research process especially in regard to sampling and operationalisation when necessary.

**[5-6]** The candidate will show the ability to explain why they have used some aspects of the research process. Such candidates are likely to focus on rationalising the research method in terms of strengths/advantages rather than the overall research process.

**[3-4]** The candidate will show the ability to make a basic explanation of some elements of either the research method used or the overall research process.

**[1-2]** The candidate will be aware of at least one reason for choosing a specific research method or engaging in a specific research process.

**[0]** No relevant sociological points.

- (e) **Assess the potential weaknesses of your research proposal, briefly explaining how you intend to overcome them.** [22]

*AO1: Knowledge and Understanding*

**[11-14]** The candidate shows a range of knowledge and understanding of the potential weaknesses of both the research method(s) chosen and aspects of the research process such as sampling, operationalisation, etc. The means of overcoming these problems will be clearly stated in a way that directly addresses the research context. There will be few, if any, errors of grammar, punctuation and spelling.

**[8-10]** The candidate will display knowledge and understanding of the potential weaknesses of both the research method(s) chosen and aspects of the research process, although there may be more emphasis on the former. Some relevant means of overcoming these problems will be suggested although the response may be weighted in favour of the identification of weaknesses rather than coming up with solutions. Candidates in this band should, on the whole, be addressing the research context. There may be occasional errors of grammar, punctuation and spelling.

**[4-7]** The candidate will display some knowledge of the potential weaknesses of either the research method(s) used and/or the research process. Some basic solutions may be offered. However, the response is likely to only partially address the methodological problems specifically associated with the research context. There may be some errors of grammar, punctuation and spelling.

**[1-3]** The candidate will display an awareness of at least one potential weakness associated with the research method and/or process. There is likely to be only minimal reference to problem-solving and it is likely that the candidate will present material of marginal relevance to the research context. Errors of grammar, punctuation and spelling may be noticeable and intrusive.

**[0]** No relevant sociological points.

*AO2(b): Evaluation*

**[7-8]** The candidate will show the ability to evaluate by confidently focusing on the chosen research method(s) and aspects of the overall research process and suggesting practical, sensible and sociological solutions to the weaknesses identified.

**[5-6]** The candidate will show the ability to evaluate some aspects of the chosen research method(s) and/or aspects of the overall research process and will offer some practical, sensible and sociological solutions to the weaknesses identified, although these may not be fully developed.

**[3-4]** The candidate will show the ability to make a basic evaluation of the research method(s) chosen and/or overall research. Solutions offered are also likely to be basic.

**[1-2]** The candidate will be aware of at least one issue involved in evaluation in regard to the research method(s) chosen and/or the research process. Solutions offered are likely to be of a common sense nature.

**[0]** No relevant sociological points.

## ASSESSMENT MATRIX: A2

This assessment matrix underpins the marking schemes for units 2536, 2537, 2538 and 2539. This ensures consistency of standard between these units and clear progression from AS.

<b>ASSESSMENT OBJECTIVE 1</b>		<b>ASSESSMENT OBJECTIVE 2</b>	
<b>Levels of achievement</b>	<b>Knowledge and Understanding (inc. Presentation and Communication)</b>	<b>Interpretation and Analysis</b>	<b>Evaluation</b>
4	<p>The candidate will show wide-ranging and detailed knowledge and understanding of selected aspects of social life, and of the relevant concepts, theories and methods employed in sociology.</p> <p>The candidate will present material in a balanced, logical and coherent manner, and 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 show the ability to select and analyse different types of data, to relate evidence to theory and apply such skills to data.</p>	<p>The candidate will show the ability to make a balanced evaluation of specific sociological arguments based on the available evidence, methods and explanations.</p>
3	<p>The candidate will display a wide range or detailed knowledge and understanding, or a balance of both, of selected aspects of social life and of the relevant sociological concepts, theories and methods.</p> <p>The candidate will present material in a balanced, logical and coherent manner which addresses the question. There may be occasional errors of grammar, punctuation and spelling.</p>	<p>The candidate will select from and analyse different types of data, and show some ability to relate evidence to theory.</p>	<p>The candidate will show the ability to make a balanced evaluation of some of the points to be derived from the available methods and evidence.</p>
2	<p>The candidate will display a basic range of knowledge and understanding of selected aspects of social life, and of relevant concepts, theories and methods.</p> <p>The candidate will present material which has some elements of balance, coherence and/or logic and 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 and evidence.</p>	<p>The candidate will show the ability to make a basic balanced evaluation of evidence and argument.</p>
1	<p>The candidate will display limited knowledge and understanding of at least one aspect of social life and/or one relevant concept, theory or method.</p> <p>The candidate will present material which will display some limited balance, coherence and/or logic. Errors of grammar, punctuation and spelling may be noticeable and intrusive.</p>	<p>The candidate will display limited ability to deal with one or more type(s) of data.</p>	<p>The candidate will display a simple understanding of at least one issue involved in evaluation</p>