



**General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE)
January 2012**

Sociology

41902

(Specification 4192)

**Unit 2: Crime and Deviance;
Mass Media;
Power;
Social Inequality**

Report on the Examination

Further copies of this Report on the Examination are available from: aqa.org.uk

Copyright © 2012 AQA and its licensors. All rights reserved.

Copyright

AQA retains the copyright on all its publications. However, registered centres for AQA are permitted to copy material from this booklet for their own internal use, with the following important exception: AQA cannot give permission to centres to photocopy any material that is acknowledged to a third party even for internal use within the centre.

Set and published by the Assessment and Qualifications Alliance.

The Assessment and Qualifications Alliance (AQA) is a company limited by guarantee registered in England and Wales (company number 3644723) and a registered charity (registered charity number 1073334).

Registered address: AQA, Devas Street, Manchester M15 6EX.

41902

General

This was the third occasion on which Unit 2 of the new specification had been examined. Although the number of entries was small, it was pleasing to note that the majority of schools and colleges and their students are now much more in tune with the demands of both the specification and the examination. The overall standard of responses was generally high, with several outstanding scripts achieving over 90% of the marks available. It was noticeable that an increasing number of schools and colleges are following the advice to teach all four sections, and as a consequence their students dealt effectively with both the questions in the Power topic, and those in other topics which required an appreciation of the impact of power. This was not the case in the first two series of this component.

Equally pleasingly there were fewer students in breach of the rubric requirements to attempt only three of the four sections. Similarly, many students seem to have heeded the advice given in previous reports and in Teacher Support meetings not to write to far too much in response to questions that carry relatively few marks. Conversely, however, in a few schools and colleges less able students appeared to have been advised by their teachers to attempt all the questions, with the inevitable impact on the depth of response in those carrying more marks. A small minority (of all abilities) continue to write at excessive length on the two-mark questions in particular, as a consequence they then run out of time on their final section.

The great majority of students were able to access full marks on questions carrying one and two marks, although a small minority continue to misread the items, and, as noted above, some write too much. There is no need to answer item-based questions in full sentences if a single word or phrase will suffice, nor is it necessary to repeat the question in one's response. In questions carrying two marks, two short phrases or sentences will suffice, provided they contain sufficiently specific and distinct examples, concepts, etc.

There was a range of quality evident in responses to four-mark questions, which test understanding of a sociological concept. Overall they were answered more competently than in previous series, but it is obvious that, whilst most students are at ease with concepts in the Crime and Deviance topic, many are less familiar with key concepts used in other questions. In addition, there is still a tendency for students to use examples to *illustrate* the concept they are asked to address, rather than explicitly *explain* it, and, in a few cases, students produced completely tautological responses of no value. Schools and colleges should note that there is a section-by-section list of common concepts (additional to those to be found in the actual specification) in the Key Materials section of the AQA website devoted to the Sociology GCSE.

For a sizeable minority of students five-mark questions still generate issues of balance between the two parts of such questions, but overall they were answered reasonably competently. Schools and colleges may wish to remind students that the '*Describe one...*' part of the question carries a maximum of two marks, and there are no more to be gained by excessive use of examples, lengthy descriptions or quoting a further two or three instances of the same issue. Most students who address these questions in such a way usually then fail to cover the '*and explain*' part in any depth (or, in some cases, not at all), thereby potentially losing up to 18 marks across the paper. The five-mark questions are worth a third of the total marks available across the paper as a whole, and it is imperative that students have an appropriate strategy to respond succinctly and effectively to them if they wish to access higher grades. Schools and colleges may wish to note in this respect that it is on these questions, not the 12-mark ones, that there is the biggest variation in the quality of responses between students of broadly similar abilities.

The overall quality of response to the 12-mark questions was pleasingly high. Many schools and colleges have clearly taught their students well, and there was some good, often quite sophisticated use of both theory and empirical evidence; many students also used and applied evidence provided in the items to positive effect. However, there is still a tendency for most students to respond to 'How far...' by producing a generalised list of competing positions on a debate or examining other variables in a list-like fashion, but even those students who struggled on some of the shorter questions were able to produce something of value on most of the 12-mark ones. Given the impact three or four marks on each 12-mark question can have on an overall grade, centres may wish to consider strategies to achieve this for their less able students.

Topic 1 – Crime and Deviance

As in the first two series this was overwhelmingly both the most popular topic and the one that was done most effectively, with many students able to quote a range of contemporary evidence and use a variety of sociological concepts in an accurate manner.

Questions 01, 02 and 03

These questions generated few problems, apart from an occasional tendency in Question 03 to give responses that were too similar (eg 'theft' and 'stealing'), and the previously-mentioned inclination to write to excess on the part of a minority of students.

Question 04

In this question most students were able to show some understanding of peer pressure, though many did this via an illustrative example rather than an explanation *per se*, and a few simply gave a tautological response ('peer pressure is being pressured by peers'). Better responses referred amongst other things to the impact of sub-cultural values, the use of positive and negative sanctions, etc, and made an explicit link to deviance.

Question 05

Most students were able to cite approaches such as ASBOs, various initiatives on knife crime and so on in the response to this question, although the majority tended to deal with the question in terms of youth crime in general rather than explicitly considering violent crime. In some responses there was a tendency to present 'ASBOs' as an acronym without fully linking the measure to the exact requirements of the question. The second part of the question was generally done quite well, often referring to the deviant status gained by offenders and/or the impact of gang culture, though only a handful of students seemed aware of the recent demise of the ASBO in its original form.

Question 06

The great majority of students could explain the labelling process in this question, often via an explanation of the self-fulfilling prophecy. The response to the second part of the question was more variable in quality, often dealing with the impact on an individual rather than a social group. In a sizeable minority of responses this became rambling and/or anecdotal, often using examples from the Education topic which had few, if any, links to deviance.

Question 07

This question was seen by some students as an opportunity to demonstrate their understanding of competing explanations for crime via a generalised list thereof. Such responses if done effectively could nevertheless access the 7-9 band, but for top band marks students needed to consider explicitly the impact of poverty and social deprivation. Some students were able to do this via consideration of competing theoretical positions (mostly Marxist and New Right), whilst others looked at issues such as white collar crime, the effect of police targeting particular social groups and so on. In less effective responses, stereotypes abounded, with some students seeing it as axiomatic that poor people would commit crime to support their families/satisfy materialistic desires. Considerable numbers of students also made reference to the riots of summer 2011.

Question 08

Most students attempting this question were able to outline the methodological issues around statistics to a greater or lesser extent, and there were some really detailed and sophisticated responses which in a few instances were able to locate the matter in the positivist/interpretivist debate. Most students referred to issues such as the 'dark figure', the effect of selective reporting and recording of crimes and/or considered approaches such as the BCS, self-report studies and so forth.

Topic 2 – Mass Media

This topic was nearly as popular as Topic 1, and in most cases students addressed the questions in a competent fashion. However, some students are clearly not very familiar with the sociological concepts inherent in the study of the mass media, and as a result descend into vague, anecdotal/'common sense' responses in which there is often reference to a specific television programme, a celebrity, computer game, etc.

Questions 09, 10 and 11

As with Topic 1, these questions provided few problems for the great majority, though a few students misunderstood Question 09, responding 'Big Brother'. A similarly small number failed to identify an advantage (as opposed to a feature) of the growth of mobile phone use.

Question 12

Understanding of political socialisation was variable, with a minority of otherwise capable students failing to move beyond one mark by unfortunately omitting any reference to the mass media. Of those who did address this aspect, many treated it as a question on how politicians influence the media and only a minority actively looked at the socialisation aspect.

Question 13

Most students were able to provide competent answers to this question, usually referring to either gatekeeping or agenda-setting in the first part, and often using an example drawn from the newspaper industry to develop the 'and explain' aspect. Better answers explicitly considered the issue of bias as opposed to making generalised statements about media influence on opinion.

Question 14

Almost all responses to this question could identify a media stereotype of men, which was often elaborated at some considerable length via an example. Most responses were able to address the 'and explain' aspect through, for example, consideration of the pressure to conform to a masculine image, the negative impact on women and so on, and overall this question was generally dealt with effectively.

Question 15

This question was the more popular of the two 12-mark questions in this topic, and by and large it was also done better. There were some really good responses which made detailed, accurate use of contrasting effects models, and which substantiated arguments by use of evidence drawn from writers such as Gauntlett, as well as the 'usual suspects' of the Bulger case and Bandura. Even less full answers were able to outline the hypodermic syringe model in a reasonably capable fashion and link it to some generalised evidence, and therefore managed to reach the 4-6 mark band.

Question 16

Responses to this question were more variable in quality. Poorer responses largely consisted of generalised or superficial statements about access to the internet, blogs and social networking sites, and rarely addressed the 'freedom of speech' aspect in any depth (if at all). Some students saw this latter solely in terms of internet safety issues or hacking, and few made use of the range of contemporary, worldwide events such as the role of digital media in the so-called 'Arab Spring'.

Topic 3 – Power

This topic was both more popular and answered more competently than in the previous two series, the standard benefitting from the fact that the great majority who completed questions from this section did so intentionally rather than through rubric errors as in the past. A small minority of students for whom this was the third section experienced some time management issues, but these were less pronounced than in previous series.

Questions 17, 18 and 19

These questions posed few problems, although a small minority of students made general statements such as 'talking to people' in response to Question 19. Once again there was also a tendency towards verbosity in this question when, as previously mentioned, two brief phrases such as 'joining a union' or 'going on strike' would suffice.

Question 20

As with the other four-mark questions, responses to this question were variable in quality. Better responses usually identified a relationship in which there was an unequal share of power and developed this through concepts such as patriarchy, etc. Less effective answers made vague statements about the nature of power and/or made brief reference to a generalised example, eg 'it's when teachers have power over you'.

Question 21

It was clear from the responses to this question that most students had revised typologies of pressure groups, since there were many examples where students described these at length; usually this had the effect of reducing their focus on the question. Some students made vague references to 'protesting' when responding to the first part, whilst several seemed convinced that pressure groups paid the Government to get their way (possibly the students were referring to the practice of retaining MPs as 'consultants', but this was never made clear). Better answers usually identified a particular type of pressure group, explained how these operated and then contrasted their relative success with another type of pressure group, usually drawing on an example to assist the development of their response.

Question 22

Most answers to this question were able to identify a relevant police power such as stop and search, and developed this sufficiently for the two marks available for the first part of the mark scheme. The majority of students then focused on the claimed negative impact on ethnic minority communities and/or the young, though a few chose to look at the reassuring effect such actions might have for sections of the community who were seen as potential victims of crime. Overall, this question was addressed fairly competently.

Question 23

Responses to this question often got side-tracked into discussion of the causes of the social problems cited in the question, often descending into assertions about the culture, lifestyles and aspirations of the poor rather than looking at whether government action was the most effective remedy. More focused answers started to consider solutions, usually referencing Marxist and/or New Right positions, but few students were able to address the role of the state in any sustained, explicit manner.

Question 24

This question was seen by most students as an opportunity to examine factors affecting voting behaviour, and relatively few responses looked at wider aspects of participation. Some students contrasted the alleged apathy of the young with the greater involvement of the older members of society, with the occasional responses examining areas such as single issue politics, the attractions of NSMs, etc. Unfortunately most students made a list-like series of sometimes quite sweeping assertions about the impact of age and other variables on political party affiliation and voting. Better responses of this type were usually distinguished by some detail on the impact of age, and some attempt to contrast this with the other variables.

Topic 4 – Social Inequality

This section suffered from fewer rubric infringements than in previous series, a minority of students worked their way through the entire paper, almost invariably then either failing to complete this topic, or doing it in such haste that answers were limited in quality. Some students experienced time management issues through writing at excessive length on earlier questions, but this was less of an issue than in previous series.

Questions 25, 26 and 27

As in the other topics the one- and two-mark questions created no problems for the great majority, though centres should remind students to be wary of excessively succinct responses which are not specific enough (eg 'education' as to why an individual's social class may change).

Question 28

This question presented problems for many students, some of whom misinterpreted 'poverty trap' as being a synonym for 'cycle of poverty', whilst others offered vague generalisations about 'being stuck in poverty'. Relatively few were able to expand in any depth on the way in which the benefits system and taking on work can interact to provide a potential drop in income for those in poverty.

Question 29

For a few students, this question appeared to offer an opportunity to outline negative (and sometimes quite insulting) stereotypes of the old, in which they were variously described as 'coffin dodgers', 'wrinklies', 'scroungers' and other such epithets. More considered responses tended to focus either on their poorer health, their reduced income or on the claimed lack of skills for the digital age, and usually developed the second part of the answer through consideration of, eg ageism in the workplace.

Question 30

Most students answered this question reasonably competently. The great majority were able to describe a consequence in at least a basic manner, and to offer an explanation for the continued existence of child poverty, usually via reference to some sort of cyclical model. Better answers were largely distinguished by being more focused on child poverty (as opposed to poverty in general), and by being more succinct.

Question 31

This question was less popular than the other 12-mark option, and was less well done. Few students seemed to have any accurate empirical understanding of social class distribution now and 50 years ago, instead relying on sweeping assertions about the status of rich and poor. A small minority were able to examine relevant concepts such as embourgeoisement, or to reference Marxist views, but such responses were rare. Many students disregarded the 'class' aspect, and chose to examine gender in its place.

Question 32

Students obviously felt more confident with this question, and, on the whole, responses to this were better than to Question 31. Most students were able to discuss concepts like discrimination, the glass ceiling and so forth, with many making good use of the linked item. Some students were able to reference a general feminist viewpoint, though very few (perhaps understandably) seemed aware of the differences between such writers. Most were aware of the various pieces of legislation that affect this matter (albeit sometimes with little grasp of their historical location), and some students were able to explore the issue in reasonable depth.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the Results Statistics page of the AQA Website: <http://www.aqa.org.uk/over/stat.html>

Converting Marks into UMS marks

Convert raw marks into Uniform Mark Scale (UMS) marks by using the link below.

UMS conversion calculator www.aqa.org.uk/umsconversion