

# **Report on the Components**

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**June 2008**

**1990/MS/R/08J**

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This report on the Examination provides information on the performance of candidates which it is hoped will be useful to teachers in their preparation of candidates for future examinations. It is intended to be constructive and informative and to promote better understanding of the syllabus content, of the operation of the scheme of assessment and of the application of assessment criteria.

Reports should be read in conjunction with the published question papers and mark schemes for the Examination.

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## GCSE Sociology (1990)

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## **Chief Examiners Report**

Once again the overall standards achieved in previous years have been maintained. There are some exceptional candidates and the achievement throughout the grade levels is to the credit of both teachers and candidates. Many teachers are familiar with the current specification and have used their knowledge and expertise to support their candidates. However, there are also centres new to OCR as well as new teachers and many are to be congratulated for making use of the support and advice available from OCR which can then be used to help their candidates.

This year the candidates did tend to find the topic areas included in papers 1 and 3 to be a little more challenging than papers 2 and 4. Paper 5, the coursework investigation, produced similar results to previous sessions. Teachers in centres are encouraged to study the comments made by the principal examiners in this report to advise their candidates about the knowledge, skills and exam techniques needed to achieve high grades. Encouragement to respond accurately to the command words used in the question is particularly important and candidates must ensure sociological terminology is used wherever possible, for marks in the higher levels to be awarded.

There is again much evidence of good practice from centre staff. Most centres heed the requirement to send in coursework proposals and respond appropriately to the advice in the proposal report, and also ensure they have an understanding of the way the mark schemes have been applied. They are to be congratulated. All centres are to be encouraged to contact OCR with any queries, large or small, the resolution of which could facilitate the best outcome for their candidates.

# 1990/01 Paper 1

## General Comments

This year the compulsory topic in Section A dealt with Power and Citizenship. In 2009 the topic for Section A will deal with Family and Identity. The compulsory Section B question dealt with Family and Identity in 2008, whilst in 2009 it will focus on the topic of Power and Citizenship. The option units in Section C remain the same from year to year and this year Crime, Deviance and Social Control was by far the most popular option with only a minority of candidates choosing one of the other options – Religion and Protest and Social Movements. All candidates are to be congratulated for their hard work on the paper. A real variety of responses were seen by the team, from the sociologically strong to those of simple commonsense. The vast majority of candidates had clearly been entered for the correct tier of paper and this enabled them to demonstrate their knowledge well. However, some candidates were let down by poor examination technique. To maximise their marks it is crucial that candidates develop their skills and focus on the specific demands of the question set.

## Comments on Individual Questions

### Section A

Q1a. The vast majority of candidates were able to use the source to correctly pick out the two relevant answers.

**Examiner Hint:** Give candidates regular practice at these types of data analysis questions.

Q1b. Most candidates were able to describe what is meant by a questionnaire. A number of candidates made some really good points about types of questions typically found on a questionnaire and the data that these would then generate (open and closed questions; qualitative and quantitative data; comparability). Examples tended to run into one another, however, and candidates would thus be well advised to clearly separate their points out, perhaps by numbering them.

**Examiner Hint:** During revision time ensure all Foundation candidates have prepared definitions and examples for all of the research methods and evidence as stated in the specification.

Q1c. Candidates generally showed good knowledge and understanding of reasons why the evidence in the source might not be accurate. Typically candidates commented on the year the research was completed, the small sample size and the fact that the findings all came from people in a supermarket. Some answers tended towards the generic and candidates should be given plenty of practice in analysing specific sources of information in order to best prepare them for this section of the examination.

**Examiner Hint:** Ensure candidates directly link the points they make to issues of accuracy in the source.

Q1d. This question is best approached as a question about representativeness and generaliseability (although candidates do not need to use these terms) and therefore candidates should be encouraged to look at two reasons why the information in the source might **not** be useful – in this particular case as evidence of the experience of **all** voters in elections. Length of the observation, sample location and timing of the observation would seem the most easily accessible areas to focus on in this particular question. When candidates focused on the key word, all, in the question, good, sociological responses were seen that scored highly.

**Examiner Hint:** Ensure candidates are well versed in issues of generaliseability and representativeness and can apply these to specific issues in a source. Use of past questions should prove helpful here.

Q1e. Most candidates were able to describe a range of sociological methods and were rewarded for this. Increasing numbers also described sociological evidence which improved the marks they were awarded. However, a number of candidates simply produced a generic methods answer rather than trying to link the methods/evidence selected to the specific research focus in the question. This is not a general question about methods and hence candidates who did this did not score highly in AO2. Better candidates described the methods they would use to investigate whether women today are more likely to reach the top jobs in Government than they were 30 years ago. They referred to both primary methods and secondary evidence and focused on the specific research topic. This must be done if candidates are going to score in Level 3.

**Examiner Hint:** Candidates are advised to select the methods that best fit the research topic, ensuring they use both primary and secondary evidence to do so.

Overall, question one was answered well, suggesting good exam technique preparation for the topic of research methods. Methodological advantages and disadvantages were usefully employed by many candidates to help them answer the questions set. Candidates that did not perform so well typically either missed out questions in this section or answered in a generic, descriptive vein with insufficient focus on the sources.

## **Section B**

Q2a. This question produced a wide variety of responses from candidates. The question asked them to describe two ways the family teaches norms and values and there was some good answers seen discussing ideas such as punishment, praise, copycat behaviour and gender role socialisation. Clearly these scored highly. However, too many candidates simply described what the family teaches to children e.g. good manners, with no consideration of **how** this is done.

**Examiner Hint:** Candidates must focus on the specific demands of the question set in order to score highly.

Q2b. Answers for this question were again very mixed. Some excellent responses were seen discussing power and decision making which were duly rewarded. At the other end of the scale, however, some candidates talked about how husbands and wives roles are similar. As the question clearly asked them about how they were different this could not be rewarded. The majority of candidates were confident in discussing the husband as wage earner/provider and the wife as housewife/childcarer but for a number of candidates their response did not develop further than this.

**Examiner Hint:** Candidates should be encouraged to focus on explaining three points that directly address the question in order to maximise their marks.

Q2c. On the whole, the team felt that many strong responses were produced for this question, with candidates demonstrating wide ranging and accurate sociological knowledge and understanding. The use of contemporary examples and evidence to substantiate points made was also really good. Common areas of discussion were the decline of religion, changing attitudes, media/celebrity influence, rising divorce rates, female independence and homosexual relationships.

**Examiner Hint:** Many candidates did look at arguments both for and against the claim but the team did still see too many one sided responses. Candidates need to recognise that this is an evaluation question and structure their responses appropriately.

Overall, this question produced a wide range of responses and was a good differentiator between those discussing sociology and those simply talking generally and with little accurate knowledge. It also emphasised the need for candidates to answer the question set.

### **Section C**

As stated earlier, the overwhelming majority of candidates answered either question three or four. However, questions eight and five were also answered by a sizeable minority of candidates. A minority did not score as well as they should have in this section as they either failed to follow the rubric (e.g. answered too many Section C questions) or answered a question that they had clearly not been prepared for in class. Centres are again advised to make sure that candidates are clear about the rubric of the exam, particularly as it applies to this section.

#### **Q3 and Q4: Crime, Deviance and Social Control**

Q3a. A number of candidates seemed unable to describe ways of measuring the crime rate. When the knowledge was accurate, however, many good responses were seen. There seemed to be big differences between centres here.

**Examiner Hint:** Candidates need to ensure that their knowledge matches the requirements of the specification.

Q3b. Candidates were able to describe how both school and the police could help to stop crime and deviance. Often candidates merged these agencies together e.g. discussing how schools could invite the police in to talk to candidates about the consequences of crime. This was fine but was not necessary. The best candidates engaged with ideas about social control, deterrence, sanctions, increased police presence and police powers of arrest.

**Examiner Hint:** A number of candidates only talked about school or the police. To reach level 3 candidates must ensure all aspects of the question are focused on.

Q3c. Some good responses were seen here with candidates seemingly well prepared to criticise the notion that people commit crime because they are poor. Several engaged with ideas of financial need, lack of opportunities, poor education, differential socialisation, peer pressure and excitement when answering. Clearly they were well rewarded for this. Unfortunately, a minority of candidates resorted to simplistic commonsense stereotypes in their answers which limited their marks. As in 2c, too many one sided answers were seen and candidates need to be reminded to address both 'for' and 'against' arguments.

**Examiner Hint:** Arguments do not need to be balanced but there does need to be evidence of a debate in all Section B and C part c questions.

Q4a. A very mixed response was seen to this question. At the top end candidates gave two examples and used these to demonstrate how deviance is different in different cultures through a well chosen comparison. The most frequent way this was done was to compare, say, tribal society or different religions with the UK. A lot of candidates gave examples of something that might be deviant in one culture but then did not compare it with a different culture to make their point. This affected their AO2 marks. A minority of candidates seemed to have little idea of what was meant by either culture or deviance and so could not score well here.

**Examiner Hint:** Regular practice of these parts of a question with teacher feedback should help candidates to focus better on what they are being asked about.

Q4b. As in 3c, some good answers were seen for this question. Again a lot of candidates engaged with conceptual ideas such as peer pressure, expectations of masculinity, social control and the media. This resulted in some very sociological responses that scored highly. Others were fine on gender but not on age, and vice versa and so typically scored in Level 2. At the bottom level generic reasons for why crimes are committed were relied upon.

**Examiner Hint:** Candidates should be reminded to ensure that they are answering specifically to the question set and should focus on all aspects of it – in this particular case both ‘young’ and ‘male’.

Q4c. Candidates clearly had some strong opinions here and produced some well informed and topical responses. For others, however, focus was often lost on the actual question and it became more of a personal response about the length of prison sentences in the UK! It is imperative that candidates do answer the question set. Most that opted for this question were able to formulate a ‘for’ and ‘against’ structure to their answer, although, as mentioned in the previous part c feedback, one sided responses were still seen. The best candidates discussed how prison teaches people a lesson, rehabilitates prisoners, removes the problem from society and gives them time to think about what they have done. They contrasted this with ideas about how prisons have problems with drugs and violence, how you may learn to be a better criminal on the inside and how other agencies of social control, such as education and family, could stop people committing crime.

**Examiner Hint:** Candidates should be reminded that a range of sociological (rather than personal) evidence and ideas needs to be the focus for their answers in order to score highly.

#### **Q5 and Q6: Protest and Social Movements**

Q5a. This was not a popular question with very few candidates attempting it. Those that did typically produced good answers showing knowledge of different ways of protesting and being able to extend these with descriptions and/or examples.

**Examiner Hint:** Remind candidates to both identify and describe in all Section B and C part a questions.

Q5b. As above. Success here seemed to depend on whether the candidate had been prepared for this topic or was simply ‘having a go’. Those that had been clearly prepared made some good points and used examples to demonstrate why protest groups are formed. Other candidates, however, produced very limited responses here writing a generic and commonsense description of people wanting to change society. The lack of sociological knowledge and understanding in such answers meant they did not score well.

**Examiner Hint:** Remind candidates which of the options they should be answering on in Section C – perhaps getting them to score a line through questions that don’t apply to them at the beginning of the examination might prove helpful.

Q5c. Typically answers here were generalised and by and large failed to show specific sociological arguments about the issue of power and joining protest groups. Some candidates who had been prepared for the topic, however, engaged well with the question and used topical examples to help support their points. Without case study examples candidates will not score in Level 3. Most did produce arguments both ‘for’ and ‘against’ but again a considerable number did not enter into the debate and so were penalised for this in AO2 as has been discussed earlier in this report.

**Examiner Hint:** As previously – ensure candidates are answering on the correct option topic and that they are formulating a debate in their response. Discussion and ‘argument’ in the classroom is often particularly useful for developing their evaluation skills.



Q6a. The same trends seen in question 5 were again evident throughout this question, however less candidates answered question six than question five. Better candidates used specific case studies from the classroom to help them describe their points here.

**Examiner Hint:** Make sure candidates have knowledge of different social movements – what they do and why-and clear definitions of these for revision.

Q6b. Answers here were typified by very general points that contained little sociological knowledge and understanding and it was clear that a number of candidates choosing this question to answer had not been prepared for it. Most answers seen were very descriptive and contained little evidence. The best responses used case study material, for example 'Fathers for Justice', to exemplify points made and had a number of distinct ideas to discuss.

**Examiner Hint:** See 5b.

Q6c. Comments as above for 6b. The best candidates explored ideas of fairness and equality in terms of giving people a voice, changing society and allowing for alternatives to the norm. Again case study materials and examples typified responses from better candidates. Far too many, however, had little knowledge of how social movements might make society more democratic and thus produced only limited responses.

**Examiner Hint:** Explicit examples/case studies are expected in order for candidates to score in Level 3.

### **Q7 and Q8: Religion**

Q7a. This was not a popular question and seemed to be answered too frequently by candidates who had not been specifically prepared to answer on 'Religion' in the exam, the odd candidate from a centre where all other candidates answered on a different option topic. Most that did the question were able to identify two examples of religious behaviour but the descriptions of this varied in quality. Most popular responses tended to involve clothing, praying and going to a place of worship. From centres that had clearly studied religion as a topic, answers seen were of a good standard.

**Examiner Hint:** Candidates must be able to both identify and describe their selected examples in order to score well.

Q7b. This was not a popular question and seemed to be answered too frequently by candidates who had not been specifically prepared to answer on 'Religion' in the exam, the odd candidate from a centre where all other candidates answered on a different option topic. Some good responses were seen here, however, that considered ideas such as the role of science and the decline of the church. To get into Level 3 candidates needed to address the issue of change in the question.

**Examiner Hint:** Some candidates debated the issue which did not get them any extra marks as question b should be a one sided response using a range of different ideas and evidence.

Q7c. This was not a popular question and seemed to be answered too frequently by candidates who had not been specifically prepared to answer on 'Religion' in the exam, the odd candidate from a centre where all other candidates answered on a different option topic. Candidates who had been prepared for this topic produced some good and relevant responses but too many of the answers seen were generalised and over reliant on common sense.

**Examiner Hint:** As previously – ensure candidates are answering on the correct option topic and that they are formulating a debate in their response.

*Report on the Components taken in June 2008*

Q8a. Some good answers seen here with candidates typically able to describe their reasons. Ideas tended to focus on family, guidance, times of stress and unhappiness and socialisation. Unfortunately, however, the same trend as in Q7 occurred with some candidates answering this topic despite not having been explicitly prepared for it.

**Examiner Hint:** In describing the two reasons candidates should ensure that they are all discrete and that they are not simply rewording and repeating what has already been said.

Q8b. As above in Q7, the differentiator here seemed to be whether or not the candidate had been specifically prepared to answer on this topic. Where this was not the case, answers were generalised and showed little or no sociological understanding. In other cases, relevant examples were given to explain how a person can show they belong to a religion, such as beliefs, behaviour, clothing and attending a place of worship.

**Examiner Hint:** Candidates should ensure they have sufficient range and depth in their response (3 good, discrete points) in order to access Level 3 marks.

Q8c. As above. Where they had been prepared, candidates often engaged well with the question and were able to give relevant points as to whether people in the UK are still religious. Some good sociology was seen here that utilised contemporary examples well. However, there were a considerable number of candidates who produced a simplistic and one sided response that prevented them from scoring highly here.

**Examiner Hint:** Encourage candidates to exemplify points they make with contemporary examples as well as those more traditional ones found in the textbooks.

Overall, candidates need to be reminded that in order to score well their answers need to be sociological. Therefore, they should choose an option question for which they have been prepared in class. Candidates find it extremely difficult to score highly in Section C if they just 'have a go' at what looks like an interesting or easier question.

## 1990/02 Paper 2

### General Comments

This year, the compulsory topic in Section A dealt with the module of Education. In 2009, the Section A will deal with Work and Employment. The compulsory Section B dealt with the module Work and Employment in 2008, whilst in 2009 it will focus on the module of Education. The option units in Section C remain the same from year to year and this year again Poverty was popular, as was Mass media, with only a minority of candidates choosing Contemporary Social Change.

In 2008, Paper 2 appears to have differentiated successfully. There is still a clear divide between candidates who rely on common sense for their answers; and those who have revised and used sociological ideas and even terminology. Generally there seemed an improvement in the standard of achievement of some candidates, which seems to derive from being prepared for the individual requirements of each section. However some candidates now provide over rehearsed answers that do not refer to the nature of the question. Again this year there was a worrying gulf between centres that were prepared and those that had missing knowledge; teachers need to ensure comprehensive teaching of all areas of the compulsory section (To be discussed later).

It was pleasing to see that the majority of candidates answered the correct number of questions. This year there seemed to be more candidates who were clearly entered for the wrong tier, which is a shame, as it limited their final grade. They used sociological knowledge well and this is a clear sign they should have been entered for the higher tier. For further advice see the comments on individual questions.

### Comments on Individual Questions

#### Section A

Generally centres are preparing the candidates well for Section A. However, a few centres are still providing generic responses of validity, reliability and representativeness in every answer. These centres need to recognise which research issue is being discussed in each question.

Q1a. From the evidence in source A the vast majority of candidates were able to identify the two correct answers. A tolerance of 2 was allowed.

**Examiner Hint:** Candidates need to practise analysing different types of data.

Q1b. Whilst candidates often struggled to define the method, they often managed some good examples, using covert and overt observation.

**Examiner Hint:** Candidates need to rehearse definitions for the methods in the syllabus.

Q1c. Again some candidates seemed well prepared for this answer. They understood the requirements noting that it is a question about validity, but struggled to apply their criticisms to the actual method or aim, thus only achieving 4 out of a possible 6 marks. Most candidates discussed the problem of the inspector not having inspected private schools, yet he commented on them; and many discussed the date. However some failed to understand the question and needed more training in discussing problems with validity.

**Examiner Hint:** Candidates need to consider how problems with methods impact on the accuracy of different hypothesis.

Q1d. Candidates did well on this question. They have been trained well to look for issues of representativeness. However, a minority are still looking at generic issues of validity. Candidates need to be able to relate problems in representativeness to the aim of the research, or at least be able to explain the issue. Often candidates identify an issue and instead of explaining it they repeat the issue. Weaker candidates are still not focussing on the actual question and discussing any issues of validity or reliability.

**Examiner Hint:** Candidates need to be trained to understand the impact of issues of representativeness.

Q1e. Most candidates identified this as a methods question, although a small number of them saw it as a discursive essay and thus gained little marks. Very few candidates actually discussed secondary data as a way of testing the hypothesis but it was encouraging to see more knew examples of secondary evidence. Again this year, there were some candidates who had learnt a generic answer and did not attempt to apply it to the hypothesis.

**Examiner Hint:** Candidates need to consider why certain methods suit certain aims.

## **Section B**

Q2a. The majority of candidates knew two causes of unemployment. However a real differentiator was whether candidates could develop their answers, especially in reference to the context.

**Examiner Hint:** Candidates need to practice developing their ideas, ensuring they give an idea, explain it and offer examples (preferably sociological).

Q2b. Disappointingly some candidates did not read (or perhaps understand) the question. They answered the question as if it was again asking for causes, thus they repeated their first answer and received no marks. Some candidates chose to look at positive effects such as “time for other pursuits”, which were credited, but struggled to develop these sociologically. Strong candidates were able to discuss lots of relevant ideas, but only a few remained sociological in their discussion.

**Examiner Hint:** Candidates need to ensure they know the difference between causes and effects.

Q2c. Candidates were able, quite successfully to discuss the reasons why all were NOT treated equally in paid work, but they could not discuss reasons for the claim. They ignored ideas such as minimum wage; trade unions or successes of discrimination acts.

**Examiner Hint:** Candidates need to rehearse evaluative techniques.

## **Section C**

### **Q3 and Q4: The Mass Media**

Whilst still being popular fewer candidates attempted these questions this year. There is still a need for all centres to ensure candidates have the terminology and knowledge to discuss their answers. Due to the constant change in media technology candidates need to have access to recent sociological text on this subject.

Q3. This was the more popular question amongst media answers.

Q3a. Whilst candidates could answer this question, many did not score highly as answers were often vague not focussing on actual laws or ways, but focussing on the agent of control e.g. “The government because they only allow certain programmes”.

**Examiner hint:** Candidates need to have a clear understanding of who controls the media and how.

Q3b. This question again differentiated candidates by those who used sociological ideas and those who used common sense. Many answers remained low scoring as they focussed narrowly on selection on a practical sense. E.g. "They pick the pictures people will like, the headings to grab attention and stories that are interesting."

**Examiner hint:** Candidates need to revise the process by which news is selected: news values; agenda setting etc.

Q3c. This question asked candidates to evaluate whether censorship was necessary. Weak answers were based on assertion and limited debate. Good answers were aware of types of censorship, examples of the need for censorship and the perils.

**Examiner hint:** Candidates need to practise evaluative skills.

Q4a. Candidates struggled to accurately answer this. Few discussed norms and values. Answers often focussed on "socialising" with answers about going out for a drink etc not socialisation.

**Examiner hint:** Candidates need to revise key concepts such as socialisation.

Q4b. Most candidates engaged with this question. The strongest answers showed how moral panics and self-fulfilling prophecy lead to deviance. However, many struggled to show how the media actually creates deviance, but did discuss relevant ideas such as copying violent films.

**Examiner hint:** Candidates need to practise interpreting questions.

Q4c. Candidates that answered this question struggled to discuss evidence for this claim. Often candidates could assert that stereotyping did exist but had little or no examples/evidence against the claim.

**Examiner hint:** Candidates need to practise evaluative skills.

### **Q5 and Q6: Poverty**

Those that attempted this section largely had sociological knowledge in their answers. Question 5 was more popular than Question 6.

Q5a. Candidates were either really well prepared for this answer or offered invented and non-sociological answers.

**Examiner hint:** Candidates must revise types and measurements of the concepts in the specification.

Q5b. Candidates engaged well with this question.

Q5c. Candidates attempted this question with varying degrees of success. Strong answers showed why ethnic minorities did suffer inequality whilst comparing it with other factors that cause inequality, such as gender. However, weak answers did not focus on ethnicity, instead discussing poverty with no link to ethnicity.

**Examiner hint:** Candidates need to revise interpreting questions.

Q6a. This was very well answered. Often candidates offered some sociological ideas such as material deprivation.

Q6b. Some candidates failed to read the question (or understand it). Good answers gave lots of ideas both cultural and structural in basis.

**Examiner hint:** Candidates need to revise interpreting questions.

Q6c. Candidates engaged well with this question on an evaluative basis. They were able to discuss how higher benefits would help, but often needed some evidence for this. Candidates were good at discussing why benefits would not help.

**Q7 and Q8: Contemporary Social Changes**

Contemporary Social Change is the least popular in terms of responses and remains the module the candidates are the least prepared for. This continues to be answered by candidates who may have had knowledge from another discipline e.g. Science or Geography, which led to non-sociological responses that scored little.

Q7a. This question was not answered by many. Responses tended to discuss immigration as the only population change.

Q7b. Few managed to discuss the effects of an ageing population sociologically.

Q7c. The few candidates that tried this question answered with an assertive tone about the opposing view that countries do not benefit from immigration. Again answers lacked sociology.

Q8a. Responses often were based on studies from Geography or Religious Education.

Q8b. Answers again relied on other disciplines, but some candidates were able to discuss (superficially) the problems of aid in the plight to help world poverty.

Q8c. Candidates that answered this question did not really debate the issue. Answers were limited to technology being good for individuals.

## 1990/03 Paper 3

### General Comments

This year the compulsory topic in Section A dealt with Power and Citizenship. In 2009 the topic for Section A will deal with Family and Identity. The compulsory Section B question dealt with Family and Identity in 2008, whilst in 2009 it will focus on the topic of Power and Citizenship. The option units in Section C remain the same from year to year and this year Crime, Deviance and Social Control was by far the most popular option with only a minority of candidates choosing one of the other options – Religion and Protest and Social Movements. All candidates are to be congratulated for their hard work on the paper. A real variety of responses were seen by the team, from the excellent to those that verged on simple commonsense. Some candidates should clearly not have been entered for the Higher tier paper and centres are advised to consider their candidates abilities carefully when making decisions on entry. The majority, however, showed good sociological knowledge and understanding and impressed the teams with their use of contemporary examples and sociological concepts to support points made. This is something that should be strongly encouraged by centres. For candidates to maximise their marks it is crucial that they develop good examination skills and focus on the specific demands of the question set.

### Comments on Individual Questions

#### Section A

Q1a. The vast majority of candidates were able to use the source to correctly pick out the two relevant answers.

**Examiner Hint:** Give candidates regular practice at these types of data analysis questions.

Q1b. Candidates generally showed good knowledge and understanding of a variety of reasons as to why the evidence in the source might not be accurate. Typically candidates commented on the year the research was completed, the fact that the results were adapted from a politics magazine and that the findings all came from people in a supermarket. Candidates need to be clear, though, that in their explanations they must explain why/how the point they have made may impact on **accuracy** – too many identified the unrepresentative/small sample but didn't then go on to link this point with accuracy in their explanation.

**Examiner Hint:** Ensure candidates directly link the points they make to issues of accuracy in the source.

Q1c. A real range of answers were seen here. Some candidates confidently discussed different aspects of the sources in terms of how they did and did not support one another. Candidates focused on such things as the different years, the different research aims, the different samples, the different researchers, the methods being the same and the fact that both sets of findings were about voting. What differentiated candidates here was firstly the range of points made – candidates should be encouraged to make three clear points and, secondly, whether or not they explicitly discussed the degree of support for each. Too many simply described one point in great detail and hence did not score highly.

**Examiner Hint:** Give candidates regular practice at comparing sources and encourage them to consider factors other than just the research findings.

Q1d. This question is best approached as a question about representativeness and generalisability and therefore candidates should be encouraged to look at three clear reasons

why the information in the source might **not** be useful – in this particular case as evidence of the experience of **all** voters in elections. Length of the observation, sample location and timing of the observation would seem the most easily accessible areas to focus on in this particular question. When candidates focused on the key word, **all**, in the question, good, sociological responses were seen that scored highly.

**Examiner Hint:** Ensure candidates are well versed in issues of generaliseability and representativeness and can apply these to specific issues in a source. Use of past questions should prove helpful here.

Q1e. Most candidates were able to describe a range of sociological methods and were rewarded at a low level for this. Increasing numbers also described sociological evidence which improved the marks they were awarded. However, it was disappointing to see the number of candidates who simply produced a generic methods answer talking about a range of methods/evidence and their relative strengths and weaknesses. This is not a general question about methods and hence candidates who did this did not score highly in AO2. Better candidates described, justified and explained the methods they would use to investigate whether women today are more likely to reach the top jobs in Government than they were 30 years ago. They referred to both primary methods and secondary evidence and focused on the specific aims of the claim e.g. comparing data from today with data from 30 years ago. This must be done if candidates are going to score in Level 3.

**Examiner Hint:** Candidates are advised to select the methods that best fit the research topic's aims, ensuring they use both primary and secondary evidence to do so.

Overall, question one was answered well, suggesting good exam technique preparation for the topic of research methods. Methodological concepts were usefully employed by many candidates to help them answer the questions set. Candidates that did not perform so well typically either missed out questions in this section or answered in a generic, descriptive vein.

## **Section B**

Q2a. This question produced a wide variety of responses from candidates. The question asked them to describe three ways the family teach norms and values and there was some really strong answers seen discussing such concepts as social control, negative/positive sanctions, imitation, role models and gender role socialisation. Clearly these scored highly. However, too many candidates simply described what the family teaches to children e.g. good manners, with no consideration of **how** this is done.

**Examiner Hint:** Candidates must focus on the specific demands of the question set in order to score highly.

Q2b. Answers for this question were again very mixed. Some excellent responses were seen discussing Feminism, patriarchy and power which were duly rewarded. At the other end of the scale, however, some candidates talked about how husbands and wives roles are similar. As the question clearly asked them about how they were different this could not be rewarded. The majority of candidates were confident in discussing the husband as breadwinner/provider and the wife as housewife/childcarer but it was a little disappointing that more did not engage with sociological concepts to push their answers into Level 3.

**Examiner Hint:** Candidates should be encouraged to focus on explaining three clear points that directly address the question in order to maximise their marks.

Q2c. On the whole, the teams felt that many excellent responses were produced for this question, with candidates demonstrating wide ranging and accurate sociological knowledge and understanding. The use of contemporary examples and evidence to substantiate points made



was also really good. Common areas of discussion were secularisation, changing norms and values, civil partnerships, reconstituted families and rising divorce rates.

**Examiner Hint:** Many candidates did look at arguments both for and against the claim but the teams did still see too many one sided responses. Candidates need to recognise that this is an evaluation question and structure their responses appropriately.

Overall, this question produced a wide range of responses and was a good differentiator between those discussing sociology and those simply talking generally and with little accurate knowledge. It also emphasised the need for candidates to answer the question set.

## **Section C**

As stated earlier, the overwhelming majority of candidates answered either question three or four. However, questions eight and five were also answered by a considerable minority of candidates. A minority did not score as well as they should have in this section as they either failed to follow the rubric (e.g. answered too many Section C questions) or answered a question that they had clearly not been prepared for in class. Centres are again advised to make sure that candidates are clear about the rubric of the exam, particularly as it applies to this section.

### **Q3 and Q4: Crime, Deviance and Social Control**

Q3a. A worrying number of candidates seemed unable to describe ways of measuring the crime rate. When the knowledge was accurate, however, many excellent (full mark) responses were seen. There seemed to be big differences between centres here.

**Examiner Hint:** Candidates need to ensure their knowledge matches that in the specification.

Q3b. Candidates were, by and large, confident in their discussion of the agencies of social control, both formal and informal. Typically answers were rather descriptive and a little repetitive. The question enabled top end candidates to really focus on the process of how these agencies can help to stop crime and deviance. Deterrence, peer pressure, socialisation and media representations were all discussed. A worrying minority of candidates clearly did not understand what was meant by 'agencies of social control' and hence failed to engage with the question. In order to be successful on the Higher paper, candidates must be well versed with sociological concepts.

**Examiner Hint:** To score in Level 3 candidates should have a range of points that they can explain, rather than just describe.

Q3c. Some excellent responses were seen here with candidates seemingly well prepared to criticise the notion that people commit crime because they are poor. Several engaged with concepts (status frustration, labelling, self fulfilling prophecy, police targeting) and theory (Marxism, chivalry thesis) when answering. Clearly they were well rewarded for this. Unfortunately, a minority of candidates resorted to simplistic commonsense stereotypes in their answers which limited their marks. As in 2c, too many one sided answers were seen and candidates need to be reminded to address both 'for' and 'against' arguments.

**Examiner Hint:** Arguments do not need to be balanced but there does need to be evidence of a debate in all Section B and C part c questions.

Q4a. There was a big difference in the quality of candidate's answers for this question. At the top end candidates gave three clear examples and used these to demonstrate how deviance is different in different cultures. The most frequent way this was done was to compare, say, tribal society with the UK. However, a number of candidates also tapped into interesting and topical examples from ethnic and youth subcultures. They were all well rewarded. A lot of candidates

gave examples of something that might be deviant in one culture but then did not compare it with a different culture to make their point. This affected their AO2 marks. A minority of candidates seemed to have little idea of what was meant by either culture or deviance. They typically failed to score marks in this question.

**Examiner Hint:** Regular practice of these parts of questions with teacher feedback should help candidates focus better on what they are being asked.

Q4b. As in 3c, some excellent answers were seen for this question. Again a lot of candidates engaged with both theory and concepts at a very good level (peer pressure, expectations of masculinity in a variety of guises, opportunity, differential gender socialisation, males comparatively weaker performance in education etc). This resulted in some lively and sociological responses that scored highly. Others were strong on gender but not on age, and vice versa. At the bottom level generic reasons for why crimes are committed were relied upon here.

**Examiner Hint:** Candidates should be reminded to ensure that they are answering specifically to the question set and should focus on all aspects of it – in this particular case both ‘young’ and ‘male’.

Q4c. Candidates clearly had some strong opinions here and this often translated into well informed, sociological responses. For others, however, focus was often lost on the actual question and it became more of a debate about, say, re-introducing capital punishment! It is imperative that candidates on the Higher paper do answer the question set. Most that opted for this question were able to formulate a ‘for’ and ‘against’ structure to their answer. The best candidates discussed the relative merits of the prison system and also considered how other agencies of social control, such as education and family, could stop people committing crime.

**Examiner Hint:** Candidates should be reminded that sociological evidence and debates needs to be the focus for their answers in order to score highly.

### **Q5 and Q6: Protest and Social Movements**

Q5a. This was not a popular question with very few candidates attempting it. Those that did typically produced excellent answers showing knowledge of different ways of protesting and being able to extend these with clear descriptions and/or examples.

**Examiner Hint:** Remind candidates to both identify and describe in all Section B and C part a questions.

Q5b. As above. Success here seemed to depend on whether the candidate had been prepared for this topic or was simply ‘having a go’. Those that had been clearly prepared made good points and used relevant contemporary examples to demonstrate why protest groups are formed. Other candidates, however, produced very limited responses here writing a generic and commonsense description of people wanting to change society. The lack of sociological knowledge and understanding in such answers meant they did not score well.

**Examiner Hint:** Remind candidates which of the options they should be answering on in Section C – perhaps getting them to score a line through questions that don’t apply to them at the beginning of the examination might prove helpful.

Q5c. Typically answers here were generalised and by and large failed to show specific sociological arguments about the issue of power and joining protest groups. Good candidates who had been prepared for the topic, however, engaged well with the question and again used topical examples to help support their points. Without case study examples candidates will not score in Level 3. Most did produce arguments both ‘for’ and ‘against’ but again a considerable

number did not enter into the debate and so were penalised for this in AO2 as has been discussed earlier in this report.

**Examiner Hint:** As previously – ensure candidates are answering on the correct option topic and that they are formulating a debate in their response. Discussion and ‘argument’ in the classroom is often particularly useful for developing their evaluation skills.

Q6a. The same trends seen in question 5 were again evident throughout this question, however less candidates answered question six than question five. Better candidates used specific case studies to help them describe their points here.

**Examiner Hint:** Make sure candidates have clear knowledge of different social movements – what they do and why.

Q6b. Answers here were typified by very general points that contained little sociological knowledge and understanding and it was clear that a number of candidates choosing this question to answer had not been prepared for it. Most answers seen were very descriptive and contained little evidence. The best responses used case study material, for example ‘Fathers for Justice’, to exemplify points made and had a number of discrete ideas to discuss.

**Examiner Hint:** See 5b.

Q6c. Comments as above for 6b. The best candidates engaged well with the concept of democracy and linked this to issues of power and access, looking at arguments both for and against the claim. Again case study materials and examples typified responses from better candidates. Far too many, however, had little knowledge of how social movements might make society more democratic and thus produced only limited responses.

**Examiner Hint:** Explicit examples/case studies are expected in order for candidates to score in Level 3.

Q7a. This was not a popular question and seemed to be answered too frequently by candidates who had not been specifically prepared to answer on ‘Religion’ in the exam, the odd candidate from a centre where all other candidates answered on a different option topic. Most that did the question were able to identify three examples of religious behaviour but the descriptions of this varied in quality. Most popular responses tended to involve clothing, praying and going to a place of worship.

**Examiner Hint:** Candidates must be able to both identify and describe their selected examples in order to score well.

Q7b. This was not a popular question and seemed to be answered too frequently by candidates who had not been specifically prepared to answer on ‘Religion’ in the exam, the odd candidate from a centre where all other candidates answered on a different option topic. Some good responses were seen here, however, that considered ideas such as the role of science and secularisation.

**Examiner Hint:** Some candidates debated the issue which did not get them any extra marks as question b should be a one sided response using a range of different ideas and evidence.

Q7c. This was not a popular question and seemed to be answered too frequently by candidates who had not been specifically prepared to answer on ‘Religion’ in the exam, the odd candidate from a centre where all other candidates answered on a different option topic. Candidates who had been prepared for this topic produced some good and relevant responses but too many answers seen were generalised and too reliant on common sense.

**Examiner Hint:** As previously – ensure candidates are answering on the correct option topic and that they are formulating a debate in their response.

Q8a. Some good answers seen here with candidates confidently using contemporary examples to help them describe their reasons. Ideas tended to focus on family, guidance, times of stress and unhappiness and socialisation. Unfortunately, however, the same trend as in Q7 occurred with some candidates answering this topic despite not having been explicitly prepared for it.

**Examiner Hint:** In describing the three reasons candidates should ensure that they are all discrete and that they are not simply rewording and repeating what has already been said.

Q8b. As above in Q7, the differentiator here seemed to be whether or not the candidate had been specifically prepared to answer on this topic. Where this was not the case, answers were generalised and showed little or no sociological understanding. In other cases, a range of relevant examples were given to explain how a person can show they belong to a religion. Some good case study material was employed to substantiate points made, all adding to the quality of the response produced.

**Examiner Hint:** Candidates should ensure they have sufficient range and depth in their response (3 good, discrete points) in order to access Level 3 marks.

Q8c. As above. Where they had been prepared, candidates engaged well with the question and were able to give accurate and relevant points and arguments for the secularisation debate. Some excellent sociology was seen here that utilised contemporary examples well. Most candidates engaged well with the debate and provided evidence to both support and contradict the claim. Again, however, there was a minority of candidates who wrote superficially and demonstrated little understanding of the issues.

**Examiner Hint:** Encourage candidates to exemplify points and arguments they make with contemporary examples as well as those more traditional ones found in the textbooks.

Overall, candidates need to be reminded that in order to score well their answers need to be sociological. Therefore they should not choose an option question for which they have not been prepared in class. Candidates find it extremely difficult to score highly in Section C if they just 'have a go' at what looks like an interesting or easier question.

## 1990/04 Paper 4

### General Comments

This year, the compulsory topic in Section A dealt with the module of Education. In 2009, the Section A will deal with Work and Employment. The compulsory Section B dealt with the module Work and Employment in 2008, whilst in 2009 it will focus on the module of Education. The option units in Section C remain the same from year to year and this year again Poverty was popular, as was Mass Media, with only a minority of candidates choosing Contemporary Social Change.

In 2008, Paper 4 appears to have differentiated successfully. As always there remains a clear divide between candidates who rely on common sense for their answers, possibly having been entered for the wrong tier; and those who have revised and used sociological evidence, relevant contemporary examples and terminology. Again there seemed an improvement in the standard of achievement of some candidates, especially in reference to Section A, which seems to derive from being prepared for the individual requirements of each section. However some centres had missing knowledge in certain areas; teachers need to ensure comprehensive teaching of all areas of the syllabus. (To be discussed later)

It was pleasing to see that the majority of candidates answered the correct amount of questions with far less candidates attempting all questions. Some candidates do still run out of time, although this seemed less of a problem this year. As previously, where it is a problem it appears that candidates are writing too much for answers to Section A 1e and Section B and C part a's. For further advice see the comments on individual questions.

This year however, there did seem to be an increase in the number of centres that had some candidates responding to the Mass Media questions and others responding to the Poverty questions. Whilst teaching extra topics may be a good idea, there was some evidence of gaps in sociological knowledge. (See the Mass Media section comments)

### Comments on Individual Questions

#### Section A

Generally centres are preparing the candidates well for Section A. However, a few centres are still providing generic responses of validity, reliability and representativeness in every answer. These centres need to recognise which research issue is being discussed in each question.

Q1a. From the evidence in source A the vast majority of candidates were able to identify the two correct percentages. A tolerance of 2 was accepted.

Q1b. Candidates were divided by the responses to this question. Not all stuck to accuracy (validity) and thus they did not score highly. The question asked about observation and there were plenty of possible issues but weaker candidates often failed to consider issues with the method itself.

**Examiner Hint:** Candidates need to revise the disadvantages of using methods.

Q1c. Candidates were differentiated by those that seem prepared for the requirements of this question and others who did not. Weaker candidates copied from the items without explicit reference to support or non-support of the items or even compared the wrong sources. Some candidates did not refer to the content of the sources at all, describing the different methods used. Strong responses looked at areas of similarity and areas of difference, with some overall conclusion of support.

**Examiner Hint:** Candidates must practise this format of question.

Q1d. Candidates did well on this question. They have been trained well to look for issues of representativeness. However, a minority are still looking at generic issues of validity. Candidates need to be able to relate problems in representativeness to the aim of the research. Often responses were merely repetitive e.g. the teacher was female, so she can only speak for females. This did not receive A02 marks as it did not look at the aim or the effect on the aim of the lack of representativeness.

**Examiner Hint:** Candidates need to practise considering issues of representativeness and their impact on different aims.

Q1e. Candidates are prepared well for the requirements of this question however; there were still too many partly generic and rehearsed responses. Candidates seem to have knowledge of questionnaires, interviews and observation and this year many centres provided some excellent justification for methods, but it was too generic. Answers were then too detailed and long and they did not score full marks as they did not truly engage with the aim. For some they had clearly been trained to discuss issues that are not of GCSE level e.g. quantitative and qualitative methods, but they did not understand the terms, further highlighting rote learning. It was encouraging to see far more centres referring to secondary evidence but often they did so in a simplistic and generic manner. Best responses considered evidence, such as diaries, of candidates in different sets or looking at merit systems in schools. This year it was pleasing to see so many candidates consider the practical issues e.g. observation was best suited to seeing how people are treated.

**Examiner Hint:** Candidates should rehearse matching methods to aims.

## **Section B**

Q2a. The majority of candidates could describe three causes of unemployment, although some struggled to separately identify, losing some marks. It was encouraging to see a consideration of causes that were individual/ cultural as well as structural. Some candidates still wrote too much which then meant they ran out of time (refer to the mark scheme and use the idea of a mark a minute).

**Examiner Hint:** Candidates need to practice the necessary format of identified answer and then description.

Q2b. Most candidates engaged with this question well. The best responses discussed effects on the individual and society. Some interesting responses discussed the possible positive effects such as more time with the family. Poor responses were characterised by non-sociological ideas, basing answers purely on lack of money. Candidates should be encouraged to focus on explaining at least three clear points to maximize their marks in this question. They should also ensure they give examples and discuss their ideas. Some clearly prepared candidates lost marks due to not discussing their sociological answers, merely listing them. Some weaker candidates failed to score as they misread the question and discussed causes instead of effects, repeating their information from question 2a.

**Examiner Hint:** Candidates need to rehearse developing their ideas. Many schools refer to PEE; Point, Evidence, Explanation

Q2c. Candidates were asked to evaluate whether people in paid work were treated equally. Good responses discussed legislative changes such as anti discrimination laws, minimum wage and the work of trade unions to help achieve equality, with the comparison of the existence of inequality based on race, age or gender. They used plenty of sociological terminology and thus were able to evaluate the claim. Weaker responses did not evaluate the claim, merely arguing

against it. Centres need to remind candidates to conclude their argument to achieve full marks on their A02 evaluation.

**Examiner Hint:** Candidates need to ensure they revise work with an evaluative approach, always considering opposition.

## **Section C**

### **Q3 and Q4: The Mass Media**

Whilst still being popular fewer candidates are doing this module. There is still a need for all centres to ensure candidates have the terminology and knowledge to discuss their answers. Due to the constant change in media technology candidates need to have access to recent sociological text on this subject.

#### Question 3

This was the more popular media choice, and more successfully answered.

Q3a. Some centres had prepared their candidates well for this question and they could identify ways the media is controlled such as through the watershed; censorship or even through groups such as the audience. However, where answers focussed on groups that control the media, they often failed to describe how.

**Examiner Hint:** Candidates need to practise the necessary format of identified answer and then description.

Q3b. Candidates either did well on this question using the appropriate discussion of agenda setting; news values etc or they completely failed to answer the question, often ignoring the words “how” and “newspapers” and merely listing groups that control the media.

**Examiner Hint:** Centres need to ensure they train candidates to understand the different command words, for example the difference between “ways” and “how”.

Q3c. This question asked candidates to evaluate whether there should be control over the media. Good answers were aware of types of censorship, examples of the need for censorship and the perils. Weak answers were based on assertion and limited debate. Moreover, some candidates are still not ensuring they use a conclusion.

**Examiner Hint:** Candidates need to ensure they revise work with an evaluative approach, always considering opposition.

Q4a. Disappointingly candidates struggled to accurately answer this question. Few discussed norms and values. Often they focussed on “socialising” with answers about going out for a drink etc.

**Examiner hint:** Candidates need to revise key concepts such as socialisation.

Q4b. Candidates were divided by their responses to this question. Most candidates did engage with this question, but not all scored highly. The strongest answers showed how moral panics and self-fulfilling prophecy led to deviance. However, many struggled to show how the media actually creates deviance, but did discuss relevant ideas such as copying violent films.

**Examiner hint:** Candidates need to practise developing their answers.

Q4c. Candidates that answered this question struggled to discuss evidence. Often they could assert that stereotyping did exist but without much sociological evidence, and had little or no examples or evidence against the claim.

**Examiner Hint:** Candidates need to ensure they revise work evaluatively, always considering opposition.

### **Q5 and Q6: Poverty**

Those that attempted this section largely had sociological knowledge in their answers. Question 5 was more popular than Question 6.

Q5a. Largely candidates were able to identify and describe three ways poverty is measured. A few answers lost marks as they looked at definitions of poverty that were not measurements.

**Examiner Hint:** Candidates should rehearse identifying then explaining ideas.

Q5b. Answers were divided between candidates that did not fully understand “social exclusion” focussing only on the social aspect; and those who did understand the term and discussed the holistic process of exclusion through social/ political and economic factors.

**Examiner Hint:** Candidates must revise key terms comprehensively.

Q5c. Many candidates successfully debated the ways ethnic minorities have a greater chance of being poor and contrasted their ideas with other factors that put you at risk of poverty such as gender. Answers varied through the use of sociological evidence / language.

**Examiner Hint:** Candidates must remember to include as many sociological terms as possible.

Q6a. This question was well answered with most candidates able to cite three different ways poverty might affect a child’s education. Candidates that lost marks did so due to repetitive ideas.

**Examiner Hint:** Candidates should practise identifying three factors of all key areas.

Q6b. Candidates were able to discuss how people might be prevented from rising out of poverty. The best responses cited the many sociological concepts that describe reasons for people being poor such as the dependency culture. Some responses lost marks due to not developing their ideas fully.

**Examiner Hint:** Candidates need to rehearse developing their ideas. Many schools refer to PEE; Point, Evidence, Explanation

Q6c. Again candidates engaged with this question. This year there seemed an increase in centres that have taught theory. Some centre’s responses attempted discussion of the Marxist view that capitalism needs poverty. However, for weaker candidates this was clearly not understood and thus they provided very confused responses.

**Examiner Hint:** Candidates need to practise evaluation skills.

### **Q7 and Q8: Contemporary Social Changes**

Contemporary Social Change remains the least popular in terms of responses and also seems to be the module the candidates are the least prepared for. This seemed to be answered by candidates who may have had knowledge from another discipline e.g. Science or Geography, which led to non-sociological responses that scored little.

Q7a. This question was not answered by many. Responses just discussed immigration as the only population change.



*Report on the Components taken in June 2008*

Q7b. Few managed to discuss the effects of an ageing population sociologically.

Q7c. The few candidates that tried this question answered with an assertive tone about the opposing view that countries do not benefit from immigration. Again answers lacked sociology.

Q8a. Responses often were based on studies from Geography or Religious Education.

Q8b. Answers again relied on other disciplines, but some candidates were able to discuss (superficially) the problems of aid in the plight to help world poverty.

Q8c. Candidates that answered this question did not really debate the issue. Answers were limited to technology being good for individuals.

# 1990/05 Report On Component

## **General comments**

Overall the high standard of work achieved in previous years has continued. Most candidates presented work which was well organized and conformed to the structure proposed in the specification. Good studies were compact yet had an internal structure and dynamic of their own. There were some exceptional pieces of coursework submitted where innovation and originality were evident and in which the technical sociological merit demonstrated a real depth of understanding.

Most centre staff have gained a sound understanding of the requirements of this component and have supported their candidates appropriately. However, some over-direction was apparent with some poorer candidates demonstrating a lack of understanding and appearing to have followed instructions without knowing why.

Centres which are the most successful have acted on the advice given in the reports on proposals and used the OCR consultation process to clarify any uncertainties with regard to the production, assessment and/or administration of the coursework. Most centres now submit proposal forms for comment and approval but centres are reminded that submission of the forms is a requirement and support from OCR is always available.

## **Administration**

Most centres executed the administration tasks in accordance with the procedures and dates stipulated by OCR; this enables the moderation process to run smoothly and efficiently and is much appreciated. There were some centres which had to be contacted several times to provide mark forms and samples and it is important that centre staff are familiar with the processes and dates for receipt of material by moderators and OCR.

The recording of absent candidates with '0' instead of 'A' on the MS1 continues to be a problem and there were a number of instances of inaccurate totalling of marks and transcription errors. It is time consuming for moderators to send and request return of the amend forms. Centre staff must make clear which assessor has been responsible for each candidate's work.

There has been an increase this year in the number of centres who have failed to send the sample requested due to lost coursework. Centres must contact OCR about missing work, in line with established procedures, prior to moderation.

Few centres had to be reminded about the CCS160 and overall, most centres were efficient in the first instance and co-operative and responsive if the need for contact occurred and this is appreciated.

## **Marking**

Again, many centre staff demonstrated excellent understanding of the AOs and the application of these. As in previous years, the OCR training sessions held in the Autumn term proved successful and centre staff have also acted on advice given in the feedback report on the coursework proposals.

Most centres marked accurately and consistently and within the tolerance allowed. There were very few instances of centres producing an inaccurate rank order. Some over-marking was noticeable for AO1:1 and AO1:2 when marks in the top band were awarded for inclusion of few extracts and sources copied from class texts. However, few centres included simply a mass of downloaded material but this is still being done in the weaker centres. The majority of candidates showed a good understanding of their topic and excellent and wide-ranging and appropriate secondary material.

The best work included well chosen methods, explained in detail and justified in relation to the aims of the research. Standard advantages and disadvantages of the different methods, not linked specifically to the candidate's own work cannot gain high marks.

The trend away from the use of qualitative data continues although there were some examples of candidates choosing and justifying qualitative approaches to excellent effect. Another area in decline is a reasoned discussion of the choice of sampling method; many candidates making no reference at all to sampling other than size.

For AO2:1, candidates need to produce results from a wide variety of relevant and appropriate sources and this was generally done well. However, for this AO candidates must also evaluate the methods used and many tended to list good and bad aspects of the methods rather than a reasoned evaluation and discussion of the problems of using the methods in relation to the aims of the research. An effective evaluation of sources for AO2:2 proved even more challenging and in particular, consideration of the quality of the data produced by the primary methods was sparse. However, many candidates are now giving consideration to possibilities for developing their research, enhancing their marks for AO2:2

As previously, although not a requirement, some centre staff indicate where on the candidate's work a particular AO has been met. This is helpful to the assessor to ensure the criteria have been met and been awarded with accuracy and it is also appreciated in the moderation process.

## **Comments on the work moderated**

### **Topics, Approach, Aims and Hypotheses**

There continues to be a wide range of topic areas researched with many centres giving their candidates a 'free rein' in selection. Again, some candidates produce unique investigations or an individual slant on a common topic and with some excellent results. Few centres now allow only one title; candidates from these centres usually produce studies of a lower quality. Centres must avoid setting all their candidates the same task and facilitating the use by all candidate of the same secondary data as this makes it difficult to differentiate between candidates, reduces the range and often results in a lower level of performance.

The number of studies which have a focus on media effects has increased further. In particular, study of body image. As previously, these candidates often struggled to produce meaningful conclusions and with less able candidates, the coverage of the tabloid press and popular magazines was extensive but the sociological content was sparse. There has also been an increase in studies related to different aspects of youth and gang culture and with some reduction in the focus on the more traditional areas of housework and family types.

Few candidates now research unsuitable topics in a potentially insensitive way such as the questioning of their peer group about child abuse or suicide but there were still a number of ethical issues which arose. As previously, some candidates asked questions of participants regarding sexual behaviour or drug taking etc. which are inappropriate for the age group of researchers and respondents in a school setting.

A small number of centres were very strong on the notion of operationalisation of concepts which not only brought a degree of sophistication to the investigation but also assisted the candidates in clarifying the direction of their research and development of a plan of research. This is a very positive trend.

Again, the most successful work came from candidates who identified a clear set of aims and related back directly to these at every stage of the enquiry.

### **Methods and Sources**

As discussed above, most candidates tend towards the use of the survey method to provide quantitative primary data, even when a different method may be more interesting and appropriate. Candidates studying media representation could be advised to consider using quantitative content analysis.

Pilot studies were mentioned by many candidates but not used fully to explain and justify changes made.

### **Using Evidence**

Again, candidates continue to find the analysis and application of the evidence to draw conclusions to be the most challenging part of the work and this proved to be a differentiator of the higher and lower ability level candidates. However, the combining of both primary and secondary results to produce conclusions is becoming more common and centre staff would seem to be preparing their candidates in this area more effectively. This is commendable and a welcome trend.

### **Overall**

From this component, candidates of all abilities are able to see Sociology as a discipline which has no absolutes and this in turn helps all candidates to develop conceptual thinking and analytical skills. Investigating society is challenging and it is due to the excellent support given by centre staff that candidates are able to develop their practical skills, produce meaningful results, and see Sociology as an ever-changing discipline which responds to the issues in society today and is of relevance to the candidates' own lives.

Support and advice, on any aspect of the production, assessment and administration of the coursework, is always available for centre staff if needed

# Grade Thresholds

General Certificate of Secondary Education  
Sociology (Specification Code 1990)  
June 2008 Examination Series

## Component Threshold Marks

Component	Max Mark	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
01	80	n/a	n/a	51	43	35	28	22
02	80	n/a	n/a	52	43	34	25	16
03	80	52	44	36	28	n/a	n/a	n/a
04	80	60	50	41	32	n/a	n/a	n/a
05	40	32	27	23	18	13	9	5

## Specification Options

### Foundation Tier

	Max Mark	A*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
Overall Threshold Marks	200	n/a	n/a	n/a	120	100	81	62	43
Percentage in Grade	200	n/a	n/a	n/a	21.1	29	23	16.2	7.9
Cumulative Percentage in Grade	200	n/a	n/a	n/a	21.1	50.1	73.1	89.3	97.2

The total entry for the examination was 1328

### Higher Tier

	Max Mark	A*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
Overall Threshold Marks	200	162	141	120	100	78	67	n/a	n/a
Percentage in Grade	200	6.9	19.3	28.6	25.8	14.3	2.9	n/a	n/a
Cumulative Percentage in Grade	200	6.9	26.2	54.8	80.6	94.9	97.8	n/a	n/a

The total entry for the examination was 3000

### Overall

	A*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
Percentage in Grade	4.7	13.1	19.3	24.3	19	9.5	5.2	2.5
Cumulative Percentage in Grade	4.7	17.8	37.1	61.4	80.4	89.9	95.1	97.6

The total entry for the examination was 4328

Statistics are correct at the time of publication.

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