

GCSE

Sociology

General Certificate of Secondary Education **GCSE 1990**

Report on the Components

June 2007

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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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Chief Examiner's Introduction (2007)

In 2007 the quality of the scripts mirrored that of previous years, again with some exceptional responses from some candidates, and many centres are to be congratulated for the preparation of their candidates for both the internally and externally assessed components.

Centre staff are advised to use the comments made by the Principal Examiners in this report to inform their candidates about how to achieve the top grades. The highest marks are achieved by candidates who focus specifically on the question as opposed to producing generic answers and who respond to the command words used in the question. Another factor which influences the quality of answers is the use of sociological concepts supported by appropriate examples.

There is much evidence of good practice from centre staff who have heeded the advice given in the coursework proposal reports, mark schemes and previous reports, and have implemented this advice to enhance the performance of their candidates. These centres are to be congratulated.

Report on the Components taken in June 2007

PRINCIPAL EXAMINER REPORT

1990/01 – FOUNDATION PAPER

This year the compulsory topic in Section A dealt with Family and identity. In 2008 the topic for Section A will deal with Power and citizenship. The compulsory Section B question dealt with Power and citizenship in 2007, whilst in 2008 it will focus on the topic of Family and identity. The option units in Section C remain the same from year to year and this year Crime and deviance 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 the almost commonsense. For candidates to maximize 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 Most candidates were able to use the source to correctly pick out the two relevant years.
- Q1b Candidates generally showed good knowledge and understanding of what is meant by *non-participant observation*, although a small number confused this with covert participation and hence did not score full marks.
- Q1c Some good answers were seen here, commenting on the accuracy of source B. Candidates are advised to clearly split the two points up in their response. Typically candidates commented on the short length of the observation, the year of the observation and the fact that the researcher knew the family in question.
- Q1d This question is best approached as a question about generaliseability and therefore candidates should be encouraged to look at two clear reasons why the information in the source might **not** be useful – in this particular case as evidence for the experience of all cohabiting couples. Sample size, composition and where the research was conducted would seem the most appropriate areas to focus on in this particular question. When candidates did this good, sociological responses were seen.
- Q1e Most candidates were able to list a range of sociological methods and were rewarded at some level for this. Candidates were better this year at applying the methods to the context of the question – crucial as this is not a general question about methods. Better candidates described and explained the methods they would use to investigate whether marriage is no longer important to people in the UK today, using both primary and secondary evidence. Weaker candidates merely listed ideas, sometimes not even mentioning specific methods. A surprising number of candidates suggested using participant observation (even covertly) without giving any indication of how this could actually be done. Candidates are advised to select the method(s) that best fit the research topic, ensuring they use both primary and secondary evidence.

Overall, question one was answered well, suggesting good exam technique preparation for the topic of research methods.

Section B

- Q2a This question was not done well, with a significant number of candidates being unable to identify and describe two features of a dictatorship. As this is clearly in the syllabus content this is worrying. When answered well, however, clear and accurate sociological knowledge was seen and candidates were duly rewarded for this.
- Q2b On the whole, the team were pleased with the responses seen here with candidates considering a wide range of ways that people are socialised into their political beliefs in the UK. Some focused on the process of socialisation whereas others discussed the role of social agencies: The best candidates did both.
There seemed to be little misunderstanding of the concept of 'socialisation' this year which was particularly pleasing to note. Candidates should be encouraged to focus on describing three clear points to maximize their marks in this question.
- Q2c A particularly wide range of responses were seen to this question on democracy. At the lower end it was clear that candidates did not understand what was meant by a democracy and hence their answers were either uncredited or scored very low due to marginal relevance. At the other end, however, some excellent responses were seen showing clear and wide ranging knowledge about whether the UK is a democracy or not. Specific examples were used (e.g. hereditary monarchy, House of Lords, freedom of speech etc) to substantiate points made and the candidates hence scored very highly indeed. Most candidates did look at arguments both for and against the claim which was encouraging to see.
Overall, this question probably saw the most differentiation amongst candidates as a worrying amount did not seem clear what was meant by a dictatorship and a democracy.

Section C

As stated earlier, the overwhelming majority of candidates answered either question three or four. However, question eight was also answered by a significant minority of candidates. A large number did not score as well as they should have in this section as they either failed to follow the rubric (i.e. answered all the 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.

- Q3a Success on this question depended on whether the candidate knew what a formal agency of social control was. When they did know what a formal agency of social control was, they answered really well but too many references to informal agencies were seen in the responses.
- Q3b A good number of candidates really engaged well with the question here, referring to topical and relevant examples to back up their points. Sociological concepts were also well used, particularly in relation to stereotyping, labelling and police targeting.
- Q3c Good responses were again seen here with candidates seemingly well prepared to criticise the validity of the official criminal statistics with a lot referring to and describing the 'dark figure of crime'. Too many one sided answers were seen, however, and candidates need to be reminded to address both the 'for' and 'against' arguments as directed in the question. Arguments do not need to be balanced but there does need to be evidence of a debate.
- Q4a A minority of candidates described acts of deviance rather than norms, but on the whole many relevant and interesting answers were seen, demonstrating candidates understanding of what is meant by a 'norm'.

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- Q4b As in 3a, some candidates were not clear about what was meant by an informal agency of social control and instead talked about the police, courts and the penal system. These responses were not credited. Others described a good range of informal agencies but did not link them with conformity. The best candidates did, and produced some strong answers that were highly rewarded. Candidates should be reminded to ensure that they are answering the question set.
- Q4c Candidates who had been prepared for this topic produced good answers, considering how deviance depended on such factors as the individual, the country, the religion, the era etc. Most candidates were able to formulate a 'for' and 'against' structure to their answer. At the other end of the scale, however, were answers that showed no sociological knowledge at all or candidates wrote a detailed answer discussing whether all deviant acts were criminal or not.
- Q5a This was not a popular question with very few candidates attempting it. Those that did often named protest groups rather than describing features associated with them.
- 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 illustrate how protest groups use direct action. Animal testing, the Iraq war and Fathers for Justice were popular choices.
- Q5c Typically answers here were generalised, and by and large failed to show specific sociological arguments for whether protest groups can make a difference to society. Good candidates, however, engaged well with the question and again used topical examples to help support their points. Most did produce arguments both 'for' and 'against'.
- Q6a The same trends seen in question 5 were again evident throughout this question, however slightly more candidates answered question six than question five. Better candidates used specific case studies to help them describe their points here.
- 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. The best responses used case study material to exemplify points made.
- Q6c Comments as above for 6b. The best candidates emphasized the importance of factors like clear aims, media attention and public support and linked them well with the success of particular social movements.
- Q7a This was not a popular question and seemed to be answered frequently by candidates who had not been specifically prepared to answer on 'Religion' in the exam. Most simply chose two different religions and said a bit about them. This is not what the question is asking.
- Q7b Some good responses here, using a variety of points relevant to secularisation to make their case. Some 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.
- Q7c Candidates who had been prepared for this topic produced some good and relevant responses here, and appropriately criticized the suggested methodology. Interesting references to the growing number of other religions in the UK were also encouraging to see. Some candidates again, however, produced simple commonsense answers with only marginal relevance to the question.

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- Q8a Some really good answers seen here, with candidates confidently using examples to help them describe their point.
- Q8b As above, 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 generalized and showed little or no sociological understanding.
- Q8c As above, when the candidates had been prepared they engaged well with the question and were able to give accurate and relevant points and arguments for the debate. Some excellent sociology was seen here.

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 which they have not prepared. 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! Perhaps encouraging candidates as soon as the exam starts to score a line through the questions to ignore, would avoid this?

1990/2 Foundation: Paper 2

General Comments

This year, the compulsory topic in Section A dealt with the module of Work and employment. In 2008, Section A will deal with Education. The compulsory Section B dealt with the module Education in 2007, whilst in 2008 it will focus on the module of Work and employment. The option sections in Section C remain the same from year to year and this year Mass Media and Poverty were popular, with only a minority of candidates choosing Contemporary social change.

In 2007, Paper 2 appears to have differentiated successfully. There is still a clear divide between candidates did not revise, who relied on common sense for their answers; and those who have revised, who tended to use sociological ideas and even terminology. Generally there seemed to be an improvement in the standard of achievement of candidates, which seems to derive from being prepared for the individual requirements of each section. Now in fact, some candidates provide over rehearsed answers that do not refer to the nature of the question. There was a worrying gulf between centres that were prepared and centres 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 amount of questions however some weaker candidates still attempt all questions. Some candidates were clearly entered for the wrong tier, limiting their final grade. For further advice see the comments on individual questions.

Comments on Individual Questions

SECTION A - QUESTION 1

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

- (a) From the evidence in the source A the vast majority of candidates were able to identify the two correct effects.
- (b) Most candidates had some idea of what *media material* was and provided good examples, however they often struggled to link their ideas to sociological research. It would aid candidates to make more use of the sources in their answers.
- (c) Some candidates seemed well prepared for this answer. They understood the requirements noting that it was 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. However, many were able to give more generic criticisms of bias, discussing media material and politicians and lying! A minority failed to understand the question, needed more training in the actual concept of problems with validity.
- (d) 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 still need to be able to relate problems in representativeness to the aim of the research, or at least be able to explain the issue. Thus the candidates spotted that one year 11 class in a comprehensive centre could not represent all candidates or varying years and varying types of centres. Weaker responses did not focus on the sample and its representativeness, generically discussing issues of validity.

- (e) Some candidates are prepared well for the requirements of this question, however, there were still many generic rehearsed responses. Candidates seem to have knowledge of questionnaires, interviews and observation, but often justification of their use was only implicit. Many candidates are still not including secondary evidence in their answers. Only a minority of candidates did not understand this question and wrote an evaluative essay on whether workers gain job satisfaction from call centres. The best candidates thought about how they could find out about job satisfaction, and there were some pleasing discussions of observation to understand the job. Some weaker candidates provided vague responses sometimes without even naming the method of research being discussed.

SECTION B – QUESTION 2

- (a) The majority of candidates managed to identify two different types of secondary school, although there is much confusion over what a public school is. There was evidence that centres had trained candidates to write answers in note form and this gave clarity to their answers and stopped them spending too long on the answer. Some weaker candidates failed to identify any types of secondary centre.
- (b) Some candidates engaged with this question well. The best responses described the effects of labelling, self fulfilling prophecy and the halo effect alongside subcultures. However, many candidates did not understand the question, discussing setting such as environment. As most candidates' experience setting and streaming, and it is clearly on the syllabus, this was worrying. There did seem to be a centre effect over whether candidates were prepared for this question.
- (c) Candidates were asked to evaluate whether the home and family are the most important influence on a child's education. Good responses were able to give evidence that the family does influence educational achievement and acknowledged that other agents of socialisation also affected educational achievement. However some candidates failed to evaluate their responses or merely argued that middle class families advantage their children, whilst working class families disadvantage theirs.

SECTION C – QUESTIONS 3 & 4

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 texts on this subject.

- 3(a) Many candidates struggled to ensure they identified and explained two ways the mass media is global. Best answers considered the medium and how it was global i.e. Internet – World Wide Web, allowing international consumerism. There was evidence that centres had trained candidates to write answers in note form and this gave clarity to their answers and stopped them spending too long on the answer. A few weaker candidates failed to understand the term global.
- (b) This question differentiated candidates, distinguishing between those who used sociological ideas and those who used common sense. Candidates are attempting to use contemporary examples from the media, which is positive, but often this became the focus of the answer without reference to sociology. Many gave one-dimensional negative stereotypes of women, without explaining it as stereotypes. Very few candidates could cite the accurate sociological mechanisms of invisibility, repetition, distortion etc.

- (c) This question asked candidates to evaluate whether journalists control the content of newspapers. Weaker candidates relied on a narrow debate with only one opposite view and little evidence that journalists have any control. Often responses lacked terms such as editors, owners etc relying on vague description.
- 4 (a) Most candidates could not identify two ways social classes are represented in the media, resorting to just description. Again candidates lacked the sociological knowledge to ensure full marks. Candidates needed to either identify the vehicles of language, dress, speech etc or the mechanisms of repetition, distortion etc. Weaker candidates merely listed stereotypical characters from soap or reality T.V. shows, or failed to understand the question discussing ethnicity.
- (b) Most candidates were aware of what a moral panic was, and had some good contemporary examples to illustrate their work. They still needed to have the correct / sociological ideas to aid them to gain full marks, such as deviance amplification, folk devils etc.
 - (c) Candidates that answered this question largely did so well. Most were aware of the varying sociological theories of Hypodermic syringe, cultural effects etc. if only by description. Some struggled with clear evaluation i.e. noting which theory supporting which side of the debate. A few weaker candidates relied on a common sense narrow response of yes and no, with no supporting evidence or even examples.

SECTION C – QUESTIONS 5 & 6

Those that attempted this section largely had sociological knowledge in their answers. However, some questions proved challenging.

- 5(a) Most candidates did not understand the term “culture of poverty”. Many candidates merely wrote about examples of the effects of poverty, ignoring the term “culture”. Good responses included descriptions of the differing norms and values: immediate gratification and fatalism.
 - (b) Most candidates successfully identified groups at risk of poverty, with clear explanations of why.
 - (c) This question engaged those who attempted it. Many were able to discuss reasons for and against the possibility of escaping poverty. However, weaker candidates did forget to evaluate often just asserting their opinion i.e. the poor are welfare scroungers who just need to get a job.
- 6(a) Most candidates successfully identified two reasons women were more likely than men to be poor. However it was common that candidates did not gain full marks as they did not provide two clear ways.
- (b) Candidates were able to discuss several ways in which poverty affects people’s lives. Weaker candidates relied on anecdotal answers, whilst those who received full marks managed to build their responses around the varying different effects.

- (c) Many candidates were ill prepared for this question and at foundation level failed to understand it. Candidates need to recognise the different ways of measuring poverty: Absolute measures such as Half below the average income, Rowntree's line etc. and understand the advantages and disadvantages of its use. Many candidates did not recognise this as a question about measuring poverty and discussed the differing definitions of poverty.

SECTION C – QUESTIONS 7 & 8

Contemporary Social Change is the least popular option 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 i.e. Science or Geography, which led to non-sociological responses that scored little.

- 7(a) This question was not answered by many. Some candidates were able to describe reasons why birth rates remain high in some countries, such as lack of contraception, but did so superficially.
- (b) The few responses to this question focussed on contraception with several explanations on this, thus losing identification marks.
- (c) The few candidates that answered did so superficially and without being prepared. This was generally poorly answered focussing on Geographical knowledge.
- 8(a) Responses often were geographical or based on Leisure and tourism studies. Good responses would have discussed sociological ideas such as increased workers for an ageing population.
- (b) Answers again relied on other disciplines, but some candidates were able to discuss (superficially) flight from war, poor economy and persecution.
- (c) Candidates that answered this question did not really debate the issue, some merely asserting their beliefs that charity does not work. Candidates again seemed to be just having a go at these questions, and really need encouraging to only attempt the questions they have been prepared for.

PRINCIPAL EXAMINER REPORT

1990/03 – HIGHER PAPER

This year the compulsory topic in Section A dealt with Family and identity. In 2008 the topic for Section A will deal with Power and citizenship. The compulsory Section B question dealt with Power and citizenship in 2007, whilst in 2008 it will focus on the topic of Family and identity. The option units in Section C remain the same from year to year and this year Crime and deviance 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 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 to support points made. This is something that I again hope will be strongly encouraged by centres. For candidates to maximize 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 Most candidates were able to use the source to correctly pick out the two relevant years. However, as this was a Higher paper the significant minority of candidates who either got one of the years wrong or instead quoted numbers of marriages or divorces was worrying.
- Q1b Candidates generally showed good knowledge and understanding of a variety of reasons as to why the source might not be accurate. Typically candidates commented on the short length of the observation, the year of the observation, the fact that it was A Level coursework and that the researcher knew the family in question. 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.
- Q1c Some good answers were seen here; better on the whole than last year. Candidates seemed much more confident in directly comparing the two sources and quoting specific evidence from the sources in order to be able to do this. Candidates focused on things such as the different years, the contradictory findings, the different methods and the fact that both sources were by candidate sociologists. 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.
- Q1d This question is best approached as a question about representativeness and generaliseability 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 for the experience of **all** cohabiting couples. Sample size, composition and where the research was conducted would seem the most appropriate areas to focus on in this particular question. When candidates did this good, sociological responses were seen that scored highly.
- Q1e Most candidates were able to describe a range of sociological methods and were rewarded at a low level for this. However, it was disappointing to see the number of candidates who simply produced a generic methods answer discussing a range of methods and their relative strengths and weaknesses. This is not a general question

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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 marriage is no longer important to people in the UK today, using both primary and secondary evidence and focusing on the specific aims of the claim. This must be done if candidates are going to score in Level 3. A surprising number of candidates suggested using participant observation (even covertly) without giving any indication of how this could actually be done for this particular topic area – this was not credited. 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 really well, suggesting good exam technique preparation for the topic of research methods. Methodological concepts were usefully employed and the teams were impressed with the improvements in candidate's performance in this Section of the exam paper.

Section B

Q2a This question was done well by the majority of candidates who showed good sociological knowledge of the concept 'dictatorship'. However, a significant number of candidates did not seem at all clear what this meant which had a big impact on the marks awarded in this question. As this is clearly in the syllabus content this is worrying.

Q2b On the whole, answers for this question were a little disappointing. Most candidates were good at identifying which agencies of socialisation would influence ideas about politics, but little was said about the process – i.e. how these agencies influenced people's political beliefs. Answers that did do this stood out and were duly rewarded. Candidates should be encouraged to focus on explaining three clear points to maximize their marks in this question.

Q2c Some excellent responses were seen to this question with candidates demonstrating wide ranging and accurate sociological knowledge and understanding. The use of examples and evidence to substantiate points made was also really good. Specific examples were used (e.g. hereditary monarchy, House of Lords, freedom of speech, First past the Post etc) to substantiate points made and the candidates hence scored very highly indeed. Most candidates did look at arguments both for and against the claim but the team did still see too many one sided responses.

Overall, this question was well answered and was a good differentiator between those discussing sociology and those with little accurate knowledge.

Section C

As stated earlier, the overwhelming majority of candidates answered either question three or four. However, question eight was also answered by a significant 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 (i.e. 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.

Q3a A worrying number of candidates seemed unable to differentiate between formal and informal agencies of social control. When the understanding was accurate many excellent (full mark) responses were seen.

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- Q3b A good number of candidates really engaged well with the question here, referring to topical and relevant examples to back up their points. Sociological concepts were also well used, particularly in relation to stereotyping, labelling, class, poverty, the self-fulfilling prophecy and police targeting. Excellent sociology demonstrated on the whole.
- Q3c Good responses were again seen here with candidates seemingly well prepared to criticise the validity of the official criminal statistics with a lot referring to and describing the 'dark figure of crime'. Unfortunately, there was a lack of range in a number of answers with candidates only writing about crimes not being reported. Only a very small minority addressed the crucial part of the question as to whether crime statistics were the **best** way of discovering the true picture of crime. Too many one sided answers were also seen and candidates need to be reminded to address both 'for' and 'against' arguments. Arguments do not need to be balanced but there does need to be evidence of a debate.
- Q4a A minority of candidates described acts of deviance rather than norms, but on the whole many relevant and interesting answers were seen, demonstrating candidates understanding of what is meant by a 'norm'.
- Q4b As in 3a, some candidates were not clear what was meant by an informal agency of social control and instead talked about the police, courts and the penal system. These responses were not credited. Others described a good range of informal agencies but did not link them with conformity. The best candidates did and produced some strong answers that were highly rewarded. Candidates need to be reminded to answer the question set.
- Q4c Candidates who had been prepared for this topic produced good answers, considering how deviance depended on such factors as the individual, the country, the culture, the religion, the era etc. Most that answered it were able to formulate a 'for' and 'against' structure to their answer. At the other end of the scale, however, were candidates that wrote a detailed answer discussing whether all deviant acts were criminal or not. It is imperative that candidates on the Higher paper do answer the question set.
- Q5a This was not a popular question with very few candidates attempting it. Those that did often named protest groups rather than describing features associated with them.
- 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 illustrate how protest groups use direct action. Animal testing, the Iraq war and Fathers for Justice were popular choices.
- Q5c Typically answers here were generalised and by and large failed to show specific sociological arguments for whether protest groups can make a difference to society. Good candidates, however, engaged well with the question and again used topical examples to help support their points. Most did produce arguments both 'for' and 'against' but again a significant number did not enter into the debate and so were penalised for this in AO2.
- Q6a The same trends seen in question 5 were again evident throughout this question, however slightly more candidates answered question six than question five. Better candidates used specific case studies to help them describe their points here.
- 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. The best responses used case study material to exemplify points made.

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- Q6c Comments as above for 6b. The best candidates emphasized the importance of such things as clear aims, media attention and public support and linked them well with the success or otherwise of particular social movements.
- Q7a This was not a popular question and seemed to be frequently answered by candidates who had obviously not been prepared to answer a question on 'Religion' in the exam. Most simply chose three different religions and wrote a bit about them: This is not what the question is asking. However, when answered well, excellent responses were seen.
- Q7b Some good responses here using a variety of points relevant to secularisation to make their case. Some 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 Candidates who had been prepared for this topic produced some good and relevant responses here and appropriately criticised the suggested methodology. Interesting references to the growing number of other religions in the UK and alternative religions were also encouraging to see. Some candidates again, however, produced simple, commonsense answers of only marginal relevance to the question.
- Q8a Some really good answers seen here, with candidates confidently using examples to help them describe their points.
- 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 reasons were given and were duly rewarded.
- 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 debate. Some excellent sociology was seen here. Most candidates were well engaged with the debate and provided evidence to both support and contradict the claim.

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! Perhaps encouraging them to score a line through the questions to ignore as soon as they begin the exam would help here?

1990/4 –Higher Paper 4

General Comments

This year, the compulsory topic in Section A dealt with the module of Work and employment. In 2008, Section A will deal with Education. The compulsory Section B dealt with the module Education in 2007, whilst in 2008 it will focus on the module of Work and employment. The option units in Section C remain the same from year to year and this year both Mass media and Poverty were popular, with only a minority of candidates choosing Contemporary social change.

In 2007, Paper 4 appears to have differentiated successfully. There is again a clear divide between candidates who rely on common sense for their answers, probably having been entered for the wrong tier; and those who have revised and used sociological evidence, relevant contemporary examples and 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, yet also reading and thinking about their responses. Now in fact some candidates are actually over rehearsed, limiting their marks in some areas (to be discussed later.) There was a worrying gulf between centres that were prepared and centres 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 amount of questions however some weaker candidates still attempt all questions. Some candidates do still run out of time, although this seemed less of a problem this year. This session the problem appears to be a result of candidates writing too much for Section A 1e and Section B and C part a questions. For further advice see the comments on individual questions.

Comments on Individual Questions

SECTION A - QUESTION 1

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.

- (a) From the evidence in the source A the vast majority of candidates were able to identify the two correct ideas.
- (b) 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 of research, thus only achieving 4 out of a possible 6 marks. However, many were able to give more generic criticisms of bias discussing media material and politicians lying! A minority failed to understand the question, needing more training in the actual concept of problems with validity.
- (c) Candidates were differentiated on this question, in terms of those that seem prepared for the requirements of this question, and those who did not. However, this year this question was less well answered due to many candidates misreading Source B and believing that the politician claimed Jobseekers caused unemployment, missing out the fact that it caused a drop in unemployment. This seemed to be because candidates were over prepared with regards to the structure of their answer, but did not give enough time to the actual reading and comprehension of the actual content of sources. Weaker candidates merely copied from the items without explicit reference to support or non-support of the items or even compared the wrong sources.

- (f) Candidates did well on this question. They have been well trained to look for issues of representativeness. However, a minority are still looking at generic issues of validity. Candidates still need to be able to relate problems in representativeness to the aim of the research, or at least be able to explain the issue. Thus the successful candidates spotted that one year 11 class in a comprehensive centre could not represent all candidates or varying years and varying types of centres. Weaker responses did not focus on the sample and its representativeness, generically discussing issues of validity.
- (g) Some candidates are prepared well for the requirements of this question, however, there were still many generic rehearsed responses. Candidates seem to have knowledge of questionnaires, interviews and observation, but often justification of their use was only implicit. There were a few centres that are training candidates too thoroughly. These candidates provided answers that were too detailed and too long, which then led them to run out of time overall: They did not score full marks as they did not truly engage with the aim. These centres seem to be preparing candidates for AS level discussing unnecessary issues of operationalisation, explicit sampling and evaluation of methods. These are good skills, but are not further credited at GCSE level. Many candidates are still not including secondary evidence in their answers which limits their AO1 marks to 3 and below; and those that referred to secondary evidence often did so in a simplistic and generic manner. Only a minority of candidates did not understand this question and wrote an evaluative essay on whether workers gain job satisfaction from call centres. This year it was pleasing to see many candidates use their knowledge of intrinsic and extrinsic satisfaction to think about how to research the issue.

SECTION B – QUESTION 2

- (a) The majority of candidates managed to identify three types of secondary school, although there is much confusion over what a public centre is. There was evidence that centres had trained candidates to write answers in note form and this gave clarity to their answers and stopped them spending too long on the answer. Some centres still wrote far too much which then meant they ran out of time (Centres should refer to the mark scheme and the idea of a mark a minute to explain this to candidates).
- (d) Most candidates engaged with this question well. The best responses discussed the effects of labelling, self-fulfilling prophecy and halo effect alongside subcultures. Poor responses were characterised by non-sociological ideas, basing answers purely on personal experience, with the most confused candidates not understanding the question and discussing setting such as environment. There did seem to be a centre effect with regards to whether candidates were prepared for this question, with candidates from whole centres not knowing what streaming and setting were. This leads to an obvious need for centres to ensure a comprehensive teaching of the syllabus. Candidates should be encouraged to focus on explaining three clear points to maximize their marks in this question. They should also ensure they give examples and discuss their ideas.
- (e) Candidates were asked to evaluate home and family being the most important influence on a child's education. Good candidates were able to give evidence that the family does influence educational achievement and discussed other agents of socialisation and how they also affect educational achievement. However some candidates failed to evaluate their responses at all or merely argued middle class families advantage their children whilst working class families disadvantage theirs. Centres need to remind candidates to conclude their argument to achieve full marks on their A02 evaluation. This year far more centres seemed to have very list like evaluation that lacked clarity thus preventing good answers receiving full marks.

SECTION C – QUESTIONS 3 & 4

Although still popular, fewer candidates are doing this module than in previous sessions. There is a need for all centres to ensure that candidates have the correct terminology and knowledge to answer questions. Due to the constant change in media technology candidates need to have access to recent sociological text on this subject.

- 3(a) Many candidates struggled to ensure they identified and explained three ways the mass media is global. Best answers considered the medium and how it was global i.e. Internet – World Wide Web, allowing international consumerism. There was evidence that centres had trained candidates to write answers in note form and this gave clarity to their answers and stopped them spending too long on the answer.
- (d) This question differentiated candidates by those who used terminology and knowledge and those who used common sense. Candidates are attempting to use contemporary examples from media, which is positive, but often this became the focus of the answer without the Sociology. Very few candidates could cite the accurate sociological mechanisms of invisibility, repetition, distortion etc. However, successful candidates did use the work of Sue Sharpe and Guy Cumberbatch well.
- (e) This question asked candidates to evaluate whether journalists control the content of newspapers. Most candidates did well to debate the place of editors, owners and the audience in the debate, but needed Sociological terminology to ensure full marks. Weaker candidates relied on a narrow debate with only one opposite view and little evidence that the journalists have any control. Moreover, some candidates are still not ensuring they write a conclusion.
- 4 (a) Most candidates could not identify three ways social classes are represented in the media, resorting to just description. Again candidates lacked the Sociological knowledge to ensure full marks. Candidates needed to either identify the vehicles of: language, dress, speech etc or the mechanisms of repetition, distortion etc. Weaker candidates merely listed stereotypical characters from soap or reality T.V. shows.
- (d) Most candidates were aware of what a moral panic was, and had some good contemporary examples to illustrate their work. They still needed to have the correct terminology to aid them to gain full marks, such as deviance amplification, folk devils etc.
- (e) Candidates that answered this question largely did so well. Most knew the varying sociological theories of Hypodermic syringe, cultural effects etc. Some struggled with clear evaluation i.e. noting which theory supported which side of the debate. A few weaker candidates relied on a common sense narrow response of yes and no, with no supporting evidence or even examples.

SECTION C – QUESTIONS 5 & 6

Those that attempted this section largely had sociological knowledge in their answers. However, some questions proved challenging.

- 5(a) Many candidates did not understand the term “culture of poverty”. Weaker candidates merely wrote about examples of the effects of poverty, ignoring the “culture”. Good responses included the differing norms and values: immediate gratification and fatalism.
- (d) Most candidates successfully identified groups at risk of poverty, with clear explanations of why. Only a few managed full marks by including Sociological terminology, such as discrimination etc.
- (e) This question engaged those who attempted it. Many were able to discuss reasons for and against the possibility of escaping poverty. However, weaker candidates did not use the relevant concepts of culture of poverty, the poverty trap and dependency culture.
- 6(a) Most candidates successfully identified three ways and reasons women were more likely to be poor.
- (d) Candidates were able to discuss several ways that poverty affects people’s lives. Weaker candidates did rely on anecdotal answers, whilst those who received full marks managed to build their responses around the varying effects using the relevant terminology such as some suffer relative poverty, which means they feel isolated, as they do not have what others have.
- (e) Many candidates were ill prepared for this question. Candidates need to recognise the different ways of measuring poverty: Absolute measures such as Half below the average income, Rowntree’s line etc. and understand the advantages and disadvantages of its use. Many candidates did not recognise this as a question about measuring poverty and discussed the differing definitions of poverty. These answers were not credited.

SECTION C – QUESTIONS 7 & 8

Contemporary social change is 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 i.e. Science or Geography, which led to non-sociological responses that scored little. As is often the case with new modules, as materials are being published currently it is hopeful that the module will be more popularly taught.

- 7(a) Candidates were able to explain why birth rates remain high in some countries, often with valid explanation such as lack of contraception, the religious beliefs of a country, and the economic climate.
- (d) Most responses focussed on contraception with several explanations on this, thus losing identification marks.

Report on the Components taken in June 2007

- (e) Some candidates were able to discuss whether population growth is good for a country, but often it was a narrow juxtaposed debate. Candidates could discuss how people's lives might be affected by population change, but again many responses failed to remain sociological. Good responses focussed on depletion of resources, pollution and changes to the environment whilst showing understanding of the social effects. However, this question was generally poorly answered, with candidates focussing on Geographical knowledge.

- 8(a) Responses often were Geographical or based on Leisure and tourism studies. Good responses were able to discuss sociological ideas such as increased workers for an ageing population.

- (d) Answers again relied on other disciplines, but candidates were able to discuss flight from war, poor economy and persecution. Best responses discussed the concepts of push and pull factors.

- (e) Candidates that answered this question did so quite successfully. They debated contemporary discussion on financial aid to international crisis and cited examples such as Jubilee 2000 etc. Again however, weaker candidates just noted the popular debate over whether English people should give charity to other countries, with little sociological debate.

REPORT ON COMPONENT 1990/05 2007

General comments

The overall standard of work continues to be high; many studies were excellent and again there were some exceptional pieces of coursework, well above the demands of GCSE level. In general, the work submitted was well organized and there seems to be an understanding of the need to be concise and work within the 2000 word boundary (but it is also to be noted that candidates will not be penalized for exceeding this). However, centres may need to find an appropriate balance as there was some evidence of over-structured work with the emphasis on the production of results but to the detriment of investigation and learning.

Most centre staff have continued to give good support to their candidates and use the OCR consultation process to clarify any uncertainties with regard to the production, assessment or administration of the coursework. Submission of the coursework proposals is a part of this process and centres should ensure proposal forms are sent for comment and approval. Support from OCR is always available.

Administration

The moderators have appreciated the efficiency of the many centres whose staff have executed the administration tasks in accordance with the procedures and dates stipulated by OCR. Again there were some centres that were tardy in sending the MSI and / or coursework samples. It is appreciated that a small number of centres were not given the details of the moderator and understandably, they could not meet the 15th May deadline for the MS1. However, some centres were very late and did have to be reminded several times to provide moderators with the material requested.

The incidence of centres recording absent candidates with '0' instead of 'A' continues to be an issue and again it has been time consuming for moderators to request amend forms and in some cases they have had to follow up the non return of these forms. It is important that contact details of relevant centre staff be sent with the MS1 and where possible an e-mail address should be included. Many centres now send a hard copy of their own electronic data and this may not follow the same format as the MS1. In these cases, staff should indicate who has assessed each candidate's work if there is more than one assessor.

There have been some instances this year of candidates' work being lost by the centre. Should this occur centres must contact OCR in line with established procedures; the substitution of one candidate's work with another is not an acceptable alternative.

The efficiency of the many centres which send the necessary paperwork with ordered samples, clearly labelled, is much appreciated.

Marking

As in previous sessions, many centre staff demonstrated excellent understanding of the AOs and the application of these. Again 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 within the tolerance allowed but where there was adjustment in moderation it tended to be downward, again with over-marking noticeable for AO1:1 and AO1:2. However, as in previous sessions, few were adjusted significantly. It is helpful when centre staff complete the comment boxes on the CAF and provide the rationale to justify the mark given. It would be appreciated if staff could use the language used in the discriminators in the assessment criteria, in these comment boxes. Although not a requirement, some centre staff indicate where on the candidate's work particular AOs have been met. This is helpful to the assessor to ensure the criterion has been met and to award with accuracy and it is also appreciated in the moderation process.

Where there was over-marking, credit at the higher levels of AO1:2 was given when there was little or no link made to the candidate's aims in the justification of the methods used. An account of the advantages and disadvantages, even detailed, without clear and direct reference to the candidate's own research, cannot gain high marks.

There was also some generosity in marks awarded for evaluation (AO2:1b and 2:2b), especially with regard to the need to make suggestions for improvement in further research. Many candidates see this as an area of minimal input and some centres did over reward very marginal comments about needing to increase sample size in future.

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. Some candidates are very imaginative and examples of investigations researched extremely well this year were a study on the attitudes to people with red hair and stereotypes of vegetarians. Few centres now allow only one title; candidates from these centres usually produce studies of a lower quality.

There has been an increase in the number of studies which have a focus on media effects, particularly with regard to body image and to a lesser extent on violence. 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.

The recognition of ethical issues in topic selection and the research process has been reinforced by many centres and addressed directly by some candidates. Fewer 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. 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 centre setting.

Whilst most candidates state a hypothesis and produce a set of identifiable aims but some centre staff need to steer candidates away from the massive 'why' questions and towards something more modest, appropriate and achievable. The weaker studies were those with little reading or understanding and topics chosen which were too wide ranging, denying the possibility of serious and clear application of methodology. 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

The inclusion of large amounts of internet data has declined further with candidates becoming more selective, but the justification for and explanation of the data continues to be absent from many candidates' work. Some candidates presumed that inclusion of secondary data was a clear demonstration of understanding of 'social processes' but contextualizing of the data and some discussion of the relevance of the issue under study for society as a whole should be encouraged.

As in previous sessions, most candidates tend towards the use of the survey method to provide quantitative primary data and whilst appropriate for many studies, there were cases where the method was not the most suitable. Candidates studying media representation seemed reluctant to use the (more appropriate) structured quantitative content analysis.

Whilst there was some excellent use made of unstructured interviews, the quality of the observation method could have been improved with more structured planning. The better candidates produced work in which a number of different techniques were used but some candidates did not understand fully triangulation, citing it as a method rather than a process.

Using Evidence

Candidates continue to find the analysis and application of the evidence to draw conclusions to be the most challenging part of the work. This is particularly noticeable at the lower end. Many candidates have been guided to analysis of primary results in a systematic way as they are presented and this has proved successful. It was also clear that some centres encourage the need to combine both primary and secondary results to produce conclusion and this is commendable.

Overall

Practical research is challenging for candidates at GCSE level and the success achieved in many centres is a result of the hard work applied by their staff and the appropriate guidance given. Most candidates, even at the lower levels, demonstrate the skills of investigation and have an appreciation that sociology is not a rigid body of knowledge and society is fluid and changing. Therefore coursework continues to be a valuable learning experience for most candidates.

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

General Certificate of Secondary Education

Sociology (1990)

June 2007 Assessment Series

Component Threshold Marks

Component	Max Mark	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
1	80	n/a	n/a	52	41	31	21	12
2	80	n/a	n/a	47	38	29	20	11
3	80	56	46	36	26	n/a	n/a	n/a
4	80	57	47	38	27	n/a	n/a	n/a
5	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	118	95	72	50	28
Percentage in Grade	200	n/a	n/a	n/a	16.78	21.93	21.71	18.91	13.47
Cumulative Percentage in Grade	200	n/a	n/a	n/a	16.78	38.71	60.41	73.92	92.79

The total entry for the examination was 1393

Higher Tier

	Max Mark	A*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
Overall Threshold Marks	200	163	141	119	97	71	58	n/a	n/a
Percentage in Grade	200	6.64	19.12	26.32	24.51	17.24	3.25	n/a	n/a
Cumulative Percentage in Grade	200	6.64	25.76	52.08	76.59	93.83	97.08	n/a	n/a

The total entry for the examination was 2993

Statistics are correct at the time of publication.

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