



General Certificate of Education

Sociology 5191

SC3W Sociological Methods

Mark Scheme

2005 examination – June series

Mark schemes are prepared by the Principal Examiner and considered, together with the relevant questions, by a panel of subject teachers. This mark scheme includes any amendments made at the standardisation meeting attended by all examiners and is the scheme which was used by them in this examination. The standardisation meeting ensures that the mark scheme covers the candidates' responses to questions and that every examiner understands and applies it in the same correct way. As preparation for the standardisation meeting each examiner analyses a number of candidates' scripts: alternative answers not already covered by the mark scheme are discussed at the meeting and legislated for. If, after this meeting, examiners encounter unusual answers which have not been discussed at the meeting they are required to refer these to the Principal Examiner.

It must be stressed that a mark scheme is a working document, in many cases further developed and expanded on the basis of candidates' reactions to a particular paper. Assumptions about future mark schemes on the basis of one year's document should be avoided; whilst the guiding principles of assessment remain constant, details will change, depending on the content of a particular examination paper.

QUALITY OF WRITTEN COMMUNICATION

Where candidates are required to produce extended written material in English, the scheme of assessment must make specific reference to the assessment of the quality of written communication. Candidates must be required to:

- select and use a form and style of writing appropriate to purpose and complex subject matter;
- organise relevant information clearly and coherently, using specialist vocabulary when appropriate;
- ensure text is legible, and spelling, grammar and punctuation are accurate, so that meaning is clear.

The assessment criteria for quality of written communication apply only to the assessment of parts (e) and (f) of the questions. The following criteria should be applied in conjunction with the mark scheme.

The quality of written communication bands must be regarded as integral to the appropriate mark scheme band even though they are listed separately in the mark scheme. Examiners should note that, in the assessment of candidates' sociological knowledge and skills, the assessment of the Quality of Written Communication will be judged through the assessment of the clarity and appropriateness of the sociological material presented.

In the 1 – 7 band, candidates' answers are likely to be characterised by the poor logical expression of ideas and the use of a limited range of conceptual terms, perhaps often used imprecisely and/or inaccurately. Spelling, punctuation and grammar may show serious deficiencies and frequent errors, perhaps impairing the intelligibility of significant parts of the answer.

In the 8 – 15 band, candidates' answers are likely to be characterised by the fair to good logical expression of ideas and the competent use of a reasonable range of conceptual terms. Spelling, punctuation and grammar will be of a reasonable standard. Commonly used words and sociological terms will generally be spelt correctly. There may be minor errors of punctuation and grammar, but these will not seriously impair the intelligibility of the answer.

In the 16 – 20 band, candidates' answers are likely to be characterised by the very good to excellent logical expression of ideas and the precise use of a broad range of conceptual terms. Spelling, punctuation and grammar will be of a very good to excellent standard. Commonly and less commonly used words and sociological terms will almost always be spelt correctly. Punctuation and grammar will be used correctly throughout to facilitate the intelligibility of the answer.

SOCIOLOGICAL METHODS

Answer **all** parts of the Question.

1

Total for this Question: 60 marks

(a) Explain what is meant by a “leading question” (Item A , line 10). <i>(2 marks)</i>

Two marks for an appropriate explanation, such as a question that directs respondents towards a particular response.

One mark for an example of a leading question without further appropriate explanation.

(b) Suggest two types of “sampling procedure” (Item A , line 12) apart from those mentioned in Item A . <i>(4 marks)</i>
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Two marks for each of two appropriate types of sampling procedures, such as:

- random;
- systematic;
- quota;
- multi-phase;
- multi-stage;
- opportunity;
- snowball;
- cluster.

No marks for stratified or representative samples.

(c) Suggest three ways in which a researcher could increase the “response rate to a questionnaire posted to potential respondents” (Item A , line 5). <i>(6 marks)</i>
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Two marks for each of three appropriate ways, such as:

- sending out reminders;
- repeat mailing;
- including a covering letter;
- piloting varieties of questionnaire layout;
- improving question wording;
- enclosing a stamped addressed envelope;
- offering financial incentives e.g. entry to a prize draw;
- posting on particular days in the week/times in the year;
- limiting the questionnaire length.

(d) Identify and briefly explain **two** advantages of using postal questionnaires. (8 marks)

Two marks for each of two appropriate advantages identified, such as:

- comparatively low cost;
- no interviewer/observer presence;
- enables the anonymous expression of views;
- greater geographical spread of contactable respondents;
- can be completed at home in normal environment;
- respondents can take their time to consider their replies.

A further two marks for each of these satisfactorily explained, such as:

- low cost increases the potential for a larger, possibly more representative sample;
- no interviewer/observer presence removes potential for interviewer bias and reduced validity;
- enabling the anonymous expression of views can generate more honest/accurate responses as there is no need for impression management in responses.

(e) Examine some of the practical, ethical and theoretical problems of using experiments in sociological research. (20 marks)

0 No relevant points.

1 – 7 Answers in this band will show only limited knowledge and understanding. Lower in the band, this may be one or two quasi-commonsensical points about research in general. Higher in the band, answers will show a limited, undeveloped sociological knowledge, for example, two or three weak descriptive points about experiments in general. Interpretation of material may be simplistic or at a tangent to the question, for example, a generalised account of practical, ethical or theoretical problems of research, weakly linked to experiments, or an account of forms of observation poorly related to experiments. Analysis will be very limited or non-existent.

8 – 15 Answers in this band will show reasonable knowledge and understanding. Lower in the band, this might be confined to a competent, if basic, account of a few practical, ethical or theoretical problems of using experiments in sociological research. Interpretation may be limited and not explicitly linked to the demands of the question; for instance, answers may be diverted into often lengthy descriptive accounts of particular examples of studies that used experiments, weakly linked to the question. Evaluation will tend to take the form of a few stated apparent problems with experiments in sociological research.

Higher in the band, knowledge will be broader and/or deeper, and will begin to identify a wider range of problems and may begin to categorise them appropriately as practical, ethical or theoretical concerns. Material will be accurate, though at times its relevance may not be made explicit. There may be some limited explicit analysis or evaluation, for instance, through some weakly developed comparison of the laboratory and field experiments. However, this is **not** a requirement, even to reach the top of the band. Evaluation will begin to be more closely related to the reasons identified in the answer.

16 – 20 Answers in this band will display sound, conceptually detailed knowledge and understanding of sociological material relating to the problems of using experiments in sociological research. This will be accurately and sensitively interpreted to meet the demands of the question and will be more balanced in its coverage of practical, ethical or theoretical concerns. Answers will show the ability to organise material and analyse and/or evaluate so as to produce a coherent and relevant answer. Evaluation will be more closely related to the reasons identified in the answer or may consider the inter-relationship between practical, ethical and theoretical concerns.

Answers will consider a range of practical, ethical or theoretical problems of using experiments. Material may be drawn from issues of methodological preference, validity, representativeness, Hawthorne effect, experimenter bias, reliability; issues of availability, scale identification and control of variables, accessibility; deception/informed consent, effect on research subjects; utility in relation to different research contexts and issues.

Lower in the band, answers may examine a more limited range of material. Higher in the band, answers may be more detailed and complete in their coverage of the different ways in which the experimental technique may be applied in sociological research, and/or may show a clear rationale in the organisation of material leading to a distinct conclusion.

(f) Using material from **Item B** and elsewhere, assess the usefulness of unstructured interviews in sociological research. (20 marks)

0 No relevant points.

1 – 7 In this band, analysis/evaluation will be very limited or non-existent, and answers will show only a limited knowledge and understanding.

Lower in the band, this may be one or two quasi-commonsensical points about the usefulness of interviewing or some material ineffectually recycled from Item B. Higher in the band, answers will show limited, undeveloped sociological knowledge, for example, in the form of a few descriptive and undeveloped sociological points about unstructured interviews. Analysis and evaluation will be very limited or non-existent.

8 – 15 In this band there will be some limited analysis and/or evaluation (though lower in the band this will be implicit), and answers will show reasonable knowledge and understanding of some potentially relevant material.

Lower in the band, answers will tend to be more limited in range, offering a broadly accurate, if basic, account of unstructured interviews. Some less focused material may also appear, for example, lengthy but weakly linked descriptive accounts of studies using unstructured interviews.

Higher in the band, knowledge and understanding will be largely appropriate to the demands of the question, identifying a range of advantages and disadvantages of unstructured interviews. Accounts of studies using unstructured interviews will be more closely linked to the issue of usefulness. There will be some limited explicit analysis and/or evaluation, for example through some brief reference to methodological issues or weak comparison with other methods.

16 – 20 In this band, analysis and evaluation will be explicit and relevant, and answers will show sound, conceptually detailed knowledge and understanding of relevant sociological material concerning the usefulness of unstructured interviews drawn from Item B and elsewhere. The strengths and weaknesses of unstructured interviews will be accurately identified in some detail. These may include issues such as time, cost, access, skill of researcher, informed consent, intrusiveness, qualitative/quantitative dimension, etc.

Material drawn from Item B and reference to examples of research studies employing unstructured interviews will be relevant, accurate and sensitively interpreted. Analysis and evaluation will be explicit and sustained, perhaps being anchored in relation to the concepts of reliability, representativeness and validity, or through linkage to methodological preference. Explicit analysis and evaluation may also be shown through direct comparison with alternative research methods or some recognition that this technique may be more or less appropriate for particular research purposes.

Lower in the band, answers may consider a more limited range of material or occasionally lack focus or structure. Higher in the band, interpretation will be more fully focused and evaluation more thorough, and answers may show a clear rationale in the organisation of material leading to a distinct conclusion.