



National
Qualifications
2025

2025 Sociology
Higher
Question Paper Finalised Marking Instructions

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General marking principles for Higher Sociology

Always apply these general principles. Use them in conjunction with the detailed marking instructions, which identify the key features required in candidates' responses.

- (a) Always use positive marking. This means candidates accumulate marks for the demonstration of relevant skills, knowledge and understanding; marks are not deducted for errors or omissions.
- (b) If a candidate response does not seem to be covered by either the principles or detailed marking instructions, and you are uncertain how to assess it, you must seek guidance from your team leader.
- (c) The term 'or any other relevant response' allows for possible variation in candidates' responses. Always award marks according to the accuracy and relevance of an answer.
- (d) 'Describe' requires candidates to make factual points or state characteristics and/or features. This will be more than an outline or a list and may refer to, for example, a concept, process, experiment, situation, or facts.
- (e) 'Explain' requires candidates to relate cause and effect and/or make relationships between things clear. This explanation may be the product of a process that includes evaluation and/or analysis.
- (f) 'Analyse' requires candidates to identify parts, the relationship between them, and their relationships with the whole; draw out and relate implications; and analyse data (possibly including calculations and/or a conclusion).
- (g) 'Evaluate' requires candidates to make a judgement based on criteria to determine the value of something.
- (h) A development of a point (of description, explanation, analysis or evaluation) will provide further related information and might include exemplification of the point.
- (i) Candidates gain marks by responding to the questions using sociological knowledge and understanding. Do not award marks for personal opinion that is not supported by sociological knowledge and understanding.
- (j) There may be some degree of flexibility in the way that marks are awarded in a question. This is clearly noted in the specific marking instructions for that question.

Marking instruction for each question

Section 1 — Human society

Question		General marking instructions for this type of question	Max mark	Specific marking instructions for this question
1.		Award up to 2 marks for each description. A maximum of 2 marks can be awarded if candidates answer generically on structural theories.	4	<p>Example: Feminism is concerned with issues and reasons for the social, political, and economic inequalities that women face in society. (1 mark) Eg, economic inequalities such as the gender pay gap. (1 mark)</p> <p>Feminists claim we live in a patriarchy where men control the major institutions of society and women are therefore discriminated against. (1 mark) Eg most political institutions are male-dominated and in the UK Parliament 60% of MPs are men. (1 mark)</p> <p>Or any other appropriate response.</p>

Question		General marking instructions for this type of question	Max mark	Specific marking instructions for this question
2.		Up to 6 marks may be awarded for the explanation of the differences between these two theoretical approaches depending on the quality of the explanation.	6	<p>Example: Structural theories take a macro-approach and focus on society as a whole, such as the role of institutions and the ways they influence individuals. On the other hand action theories take a micro-approach and focus on individuals/small groups and the way they influence society. (2 marks) Eg, Marxists claim that ideas are disseminated through institutions controlled by the bourgeoisie, whereas symbolic interactionism focusses on the way meanings are developed through interactions with significant and generalised others. (1 mark)</p> <p>Structural theories tend to use research methods, such as questionnaires, that generate quantitative data. This is because they take a macro-approach, and tend to examine trends in society or patterns such as attainment in education. This is different to action theories which tend to use research methods that generate qualitative data, such as participant observation. This is because action theories take a micro-approach and examine small-scale interactions. (3 marks)</p> <p>Or any other appropriate response.</p>

Question		General marking instructions for this type of question	Max mark	Specific marking instructions for this question
3.		<p>Award up to 3 marks for each explanation.</p> <p>Award a maximum of 3 marks if the answer is solely about Action theories.</p>	6	<p>Example: One strength of Weberism is that although focusing on class, Weber also highlights the interplay among class, status, and party influencing position on the social hierarchy. This goes more in-depth and is more holistic than Marxism, which solely focuses on economic position determining class. Eg, Weber recognises the significance of status which may be increased by non-economic factors. (3 marks)</p> <p>One weakness of Weberism is that Weber is criticised for his espousal of the Protestant Work ethic. There is evidence of capitalism emerging prior to the reformation (1 mark) eg the emphasis in the Catholic Church on hard work and prayer and ‘the devil making work for idle hands’ shows the pre-reformation emphasis in Christianity of the aesthetic ideal that Weber attributes to Calvinism. (2 marks)</p> <p>Or any other appropriate response.</p>

Question		General marking instructions for this type of question	Max mark	Specific marking instructions for this question
4.	(a)	<p>Award up to 3 marks for a developed evaluative point.</p> <p>Where candidates have answered generically or have not referred to the scenario, award a maximum of 3 marks.</p>	6	<p>Example: Focus groups would be good for this type of investigation because the researcher wants to know about attitudes towards immigration and whether they have been affected by the media, so getting several people's opinions would be useful (2 marks). The people in the group would also have been exposed to different forms of media, so the researcher would get an idea of the link between media and attitudes. Especially as it is to be repeated in different places. (2 marks) However focus groups could be less useful in this scenario as some people might not want to say what they actually believe about immigration because they think they might cause offence to others in the group. (1 mark). Other people might feel intimidated by assertive people with strong opinions in the group. (1 mark)</p> <p>Or any other appropriate response.</p>
	(b)	<p>Award up to 2 marks for a suitable hypothesis.</p>	2	<p>Example: Media has negatively influenced people's attitudes towards immigration. (2 marks)</p> <p>Media reporting has created a moral panic of immigration. (2 marks)</p> <p>Media create opinions about immigration. (1 mark)</p> <p>Are people influenced by media reporting on immigration? (0 marks)</p> <p>Or any other suitable response.</p>

Question		General marking instructions for this type of question	Max mark	Specific marking instructions for this question
5.		Award up to 3 marks for each explanation.	6	<p>Example: One advantage of official statistics is the large sample size. (1 mark) Often the sample is an entire section of the population, such as those accessing hospitals or prisoners, but it can also be almost the whole adult population, eg the national census carried out every ten years. (2 marks)</p> <p>Another advantage of official statistics is that they are readily available. (1 mark) Official statistics have already been collected by a government or quasi-government body which saves a great deal of time and money for the researcher. (1 mark) The data is often published on government websites or is available through freedom of information requests. (1 mark)</p> <p>Or any other appropriate response.</p>

Section 2 — Culture and identity

Question	General marking instructions for this type of question	Max mark	Specific marking instructions for this question
6.	Up to 7 marks may be awarded for the analysis of each theoretical approach depending on the quality of the response. Up to 4 marks may be awarded based on each developed point that draw out and link the implications of the different theories to gender and culture, using the appropriate sociological language.	14	<p>Example:</p> <p>Feminism: Culture reflects the patriarchal society we live in, where cultural institutions such as media are dominated by men. (2 marks) Many cultural norms are rooted in gender inequality for instance the convention of women changing their surname when they marry comes from the days when a wife literally became the property of her husband. Hence Mrs Smith is actually Mr’s Smith-meaning belonging to Mr Smith! (2 marks)</p> <p>It is argued that women learn culture in a patriarchy. This is a society where cultural institutions such as the media are male-dominated and represent male cultural norms. (2 marks) Hence media products often reinforce gender stereotypes for example in mainstream Hollywood films women are usually cast in supporting roles, as the male lead’s girlfriend/wife/mother etc. (1 mark) Media also reinforces beauty norms, particularly through advertising and fashion, which can influence someone’s gender identity. (1 mark)</p> <p>Functionalism: Functionalists would claim that culture merely reflects the norms and values of the society we live in. (1 mark) and that there is value consensus. (1 mark) The assumption of functionalism is that in every culture, every custom, material object, idea, and opinion fulfils some vital function, helping to both express and maintain it. (2 marks) This expressing and maintaining of culture through phenomena that take place within it is called integration. (1 mark)</p> <p>However, functionalists are criticised for ignoring the power some groups have to put forward norms and values in the institutions of society. Eg the overwhelming dominance of men in the cultural institutions of society, such as politics or the music industry, where less than 10% of music producers are women. (2 marks) Furthermore they are also criticised for putting forward conservative ideas that men are the head of the family as the main breadwinner. (1 mark)</p>

Question	General marking instructions for this type of question	Max mark	Specific marking instructions for this question
			<p>Symbolic Interactionism: SI would claim that culture is formed through social interaction with our significant others and then the generalised others. (1 mark) They state that gender is socially constructed, and this process continues throughout a person's life. (1 mark) For instance, learning cultural symbols such as pink for a girl or blue for a boy. (1 mark) and reinforcing this through interaction with generalised others such as more boys doing rugby and more girls taking up dancing. (1 mark)</p> <p>Or any other relevant response.</p>

Question		General marking instructions for this type of question	Max mark	Specific marking instructions for this question
7.	(a)	<p>The candidate may be awarded 2 marks in total depending on the accuracy of their description.</p>	2	<p>Examples: <i>Just the Women</i> found examples of sexism in newspapers. (1 mark)</p> <p><i>Just the Women</i> found examples of sexism in all 11 broadsheets and popular newspapers they looked at, using content analysis over a two-week period. (2 marks)</p>
	(b)	<p>The candidate can be awarded 6 marks in total. Award up to 3 marks for each evaluation of a strength or weakness of the study.</p> <p>When referencing a research study of their choice, the candidate should evaluate one strength and/or one weakness of its methods and/or findings.</p> <p>Strengths can include evaluation of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • methodology of the study eg validity • findings in relation to other studies • findings in relation to theoretical approaches • findings in relation to other evidence. <p>Weaknesses can include evaluation of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • methodology of the study eg reliability • findings in relation to other studies • findings in relation to theoretical • findings in relation to other evidence. 	6	<p>For example: Folk Devils and moral panics, S Cohen (1972) — Cohen’s study is good at linking the actions of moral entrepreneurs such as media and the police to labelling subcultures. His study of mods and rockers identified the ways in which subcultures may appear to pose a threat to mainstream society. (2 marks)</p> <p>A weakness of the study could be Cohen’s use of unstructured interviews with mods and rockers. This qualitative data is not only difficult to compare but, in this case, relies on the memory of events on the bank holidays and in some cases people who were bystanders and perhaps not even present. (3 marks)</p> <p>Or any other relevant response.</p>

Question		General marking instructions for this type of question	Max mark	Specific marking instructions for this question
	(c)	The candidate can be awarded 3 marks in total. Award up to 3 marks for a developed point — explanation rather than statement is required.	3	The candidate can choose a study from any aspect of culture and identity eg gender, age or ethnicity or they may explore a study on a subculture of their choice for instance a specific gang culture or any other subject related to the topic of culture and identity. The candidate should explain the ways in which the study chosen has contributed to their understanding of culture and identity. Eg, if the candidate has chosen folk devils and moral panics they may reflect on a current group that has been demonised by media and the effects of this. Or any other relevant response.

Section 3 — Social issues

Question	General marking instructions for this type of question	Max mark	Specific marking instructions for this question
8.	<p>Candidates are expected to analyse social mobility using two contrasting theories and a study, and must make clear the relationship between the key points of the selected theories and the study and key factors or elements of social mobility.</p> <p>Candidates can be awarded the 25 marks in a number of ways, but full marks should only be awarded if they analyse by drawing out and relating the implications of the different theories and study to social mobility using appropriate sociological language.</p> <p>Award marks as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • introduction and/or definition of sociological concepts/conclusions: 4 marks • theories: 14 marks (up to 7 marks for each theory) • study: 7 marks. <p>Introduction Points: Award up to 4 marks for introduction points.</p>	25	

Question	General marking instructions for this type of question	Max mark	Specific marking instructions for this question
	<p>These can appear anywhere in the essay and may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • definition of social class • definition of social mobility • definition of social stratification • examples of social class inequalities • examples of social mobility (or lack of it). <p>Theories: Candidates can be awarded up to 14 marks for comparing two theories. Up to 7 marks for each theory.</p> <p>Points should relate to the theories approach to social mobility. Generic points about theory should not be credited.</p> <p>Any two theories can be used, for example Marxism and functionalism.</p>		<p>An example of analysis for Marxist theory could include: Marxists claim that capitalism creates inequalities in society because it is structured to benefit the Bourgeoisie, who have the control over the means of production, it is therefore socially divisive. Hence Marxists claim that the ability to achieve social and economic success is limited for the proletariat (social reproduction). Social mobility is therefore possible but doesn't happen routinely or easily for those born into lower social classes. (3 marks)</p> <p>Marxists claim that the Bourgeoisie control the institutions of society and run them to benefit capitalism and themselves, the owners of the means of production. Institutions such as education and media are used to continually promote the myth of meritocracy, which Marxists reject, claiming family background/class more than effort determines socioeconomic position. Eg programmes like the Apprentice put forward the idea that if you are talented and work hard you will succeed and attain social mobility regardless of background. (3 marks)</p> <p>An example of analysis for functionalist theory could include: According to functionalists, the socio-economic system requires us to reward the most talented, hardworking to ensure they are pushed to the top of the social system. This means they claim the most able people attain the greatest rewards. This is linked to the functionalist claim that we live in an openly meritocratic system where equal opportunities ensure that regardless of your class of origin, gender or ethnicity if you work hard you will achieve success, including social mobility. (3 marks).</p>

Question	General marking instructions for this type of question	Max mark	Specific marking instructions for this question
	<p>Study: Candidates must link their chosen theories to the study(s) used. This may be expressed as ‘the findings of the study support ‘X’ theory’ or ‘the findings show that social mobility is possible/frequent/restricted etc’.</p> <p>The candidate’s analysis of social mobility should be based on findings or evaluation of a relevant study of social mobility. However, to access full marks candidate must link the study to the theories used for instance the findings below could support Marxists views on the extent of social mobility but could also be linked to other theories such as functionalism, or to other social issues clearly related to explaining social mobility such as differential educational attainment.</p>		<p>Oprah Winfrey, Pink and Eminem are examples of people from deprived family backgrounds who have worked hard to achieve social mobility, supporting the functionalist claims of an open class system. (1 mark)</p> <p>For example: *Blanden, J. and Machin, S. (2008) Up and Down the Generational Income Ladder in Britain: Past Changes and Future Prospects. National Institute Economic Review, Sage publications (Note: when the Blanden and Machin (2008) study is mentioned, candidates can refer to previous research which informed this study.)</p> <p>One study which looks at social mobility in the UK is the Blanden and Machin study ‘Up and Down the Income ladder in Britain’ (2008). This study backs up the Marxist view that there is little social mobility and chances of mobility are tied to your class of origin. (1 mark) The study found that rates of mobility in the UK were lower than in most comparable countries, for instance, in USA and Germany. (1 mark) The study also found that mobility was heavily reliant on parental background. Those from the poorest fifth dropped in terms of educational attainment as school progressed even if they began in the academically brightest group. Those from the richest backgrounds but the least abled improved. (2 marks)</p>

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			<p>A strength of the study is that the findings provide research evidence that due to social class inequalities, individuals receive different life chances or opportunities which can limit the mobility of some whilst giving others significant advantage to achieve social mobility. (1 mark) If this trend were to continue, the children from affluent backgrounds who are doing poorly at age three would be likely to overtake the poorer but initially bright children in test scores by age seven. The findings of the study support the Marxist theory as it shows how social class, family background and income strongly affect life chances and opportunities. (1 mark) Furthermore, Blanden and Machin conclude that the decline in intergenerational mobility that occurred between 1958 and 1970 is unlikely to continue for cohorts born from 1985 to 2000, and mobility is likely to remain at the low level observed for the 1970 cohort. (1 mark)</p> <p>Any other reasonable point.</p>

[END OF MARKING INSTRUCTIONS]