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# AS LEVEL **SOCIOLOGY**

7191/1 Education with methods in context  
Report on the Examination

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**General comments**

It was a pleasure to assess the large number of entries for Sociology (AS), many of whom have been studying the subject for the first time. It was clear that centres have worked hard with their students to understand the full breadth of the specification as well as the rubrics of the examination paper.

The majority of students were able to complete all of the questions set in the time allowed and many showed real sophistication in their application of sociological knowledge.

It was evident that students had been well-prepared to understand the demands of the different styles of questions, giving appropriately short responses to the 2 mark questions and using bullet points in their answers to question 3. In the questions where extended prose was required (10 and 20 mark questions) most students showed their understanding of the different balance of skills required in each question.

In particular, students were well prepared to provide a range of factors that impact gender and achievement. However, it would be worth noting that, in a question requiring evaluation of 'external' factors that answers should focus on directing each paragraph to answering the question, rather than splitting the answer between external versus internal factors.

**Question 01:**

Material deprivation is a concept that students grasp with confidence and this was evident in the responses to this question. Students were required to define both the terms 'material' and 'deprivation' without repeating those terms to gain full marks. The majority of students were able to do so, with just a few making the error of using one of the terms they were being asked to define. Whilst it was a pleasure to see the confidence in knowledge that many students expressed by giving additional application to theory/ examples, this isn't needed for the 2 marks available.

**Question 02:**

This question required students to show an understanding of how streaming (as a cause) may impact student achievement (effect). In order to do so, students needed to show an understanding of ability grouping within a school setting and that there is an element of being in a 'higher' or 'lower' ability group. Many were able to show this skill, with students most frequently suggesting that being in a lower ability grouping could place a label of 'low achiever' on a pupil which they would then internalise to create a self-fulfilling prophecy by attaining low grades in final exams. Where answers didn't receive full credit, generally this was due to a description of a school class in general (no link to high/ low ability), or that they compared different types of schools.

**Question 03:**

Students generally had a good understanding of Marxist theories of education. However, this question caused difficulties for a number of students. Unfortunately, under the pressure of the examination, many didn't read the question fully to understand that the response required criticisms of Marxist theory, not the ways in which Marxists would criticise the education system. Where students did understand the requirements of the question, many were able to identify criticisms and develop them appropriately.

**Question 04:**

This question required students to be able to apply two government education policies to the needs of the economy. Centres have clearly taught educational policy well and a large proportion of students understood what the economy was and were able to use their knowledge and application skills to answer the question. Raising the school leaving age and the National Curriculum were popular policy choices, as were several from within the 1988 Educational Reform Act. There were several sophisticated responses that applied a policy intended to raise standards in education with a global economy and a greater need for a highly educated workforce.

Students were still able to gain credit where they made some link to the economy, eg keeping school leavers out of poverty and families benefitting from being spared the expense of providing food/resources. However, there were a minority of students who missed the intention of the question by suggesting policies that were internal to specific schools, policies that weren't educational in focus, or not understanding the term 'economy'.

**Question 05:**

Gender is clearly an area of the specification that centres have ensured students feel very confident about, which is excellent. Students had benefitted from being taught a range of factors and many were able to draw upon significant examples of concepts and research.

The strongest responses understood that this question asked students to evaluate the impact of external factors on gender differences in educational achievement. This meant that they outlined the factor using concepts, theory and evidence before explaining how and why it had an impact on gender and achievement. To evaluate, they discussed the relative importance of the factor, or showed how it was inter-linked with an internal factor.

Weaker responses tended to juxtapose external factors with internal factors - often an essay with a balance of the two types of factors. When the internal factors were not linked to an external factor, this was not directly answering the question and gained less credit.

**Question 06:**

Both the method (unstructured interviews) and the issue (experience of bullying) were well understood by students in this paper. Centres have prepared their students well to understand that the practical, ethical and theoretical strengths/ limitations of the method are of upmost importance and that writing about the issue without linking it to the method will attain limited credit.

We saw many cases where students were able to successfully link the idea that schools would be concerned about Ofsted, league tables and falling numbers on roll if the researcher were to uncover significant issues with bullying and that, as a consequence, access would be difficult for a researcher. Another popular response was that unstructured interviews take longer than other methods, especially when discussing bullying, as time to build rapport and trust is required. They then inferred that teachers and parents would be less likely to give consent for students to miss out on learning.

Weaker responses tended to include descriptions of learned sociological studies or discussed alternative methods. It is important that students only consider the strengths and limitations of the method in the question and that they avoid comparing/ contrasting with another method.

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## **Mark Ranges and Award of Grades**

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the [Results Statistics](#) page of the AQA Website.