

**UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE INTERNATIONAL EXAMINATIONS**  
GCE Advanced Subsidiary Level and GCE Advanced Level

**MARK SCHEME for the May/June 2012 question paper**  
**for the guidance of teachers**

**9699 SOCIOLOGY**

**9699/11**

Paper 1 (Principles and Methods 1), maximum raw mark 50

This mark scheme is published as an aid to teachers and candidates, to indicate the requirements of the examination. It shows the basis on which Examiners were instructed to award marks. It does not indicate the details of the discussions that took place at an Examiners' meeting before marking began, which would have considered the acceptability of alternative answers.

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### Section A: The Sociological Perspective

**1 "The importance of gender as a factor influencing social identity has been over-emphasised by feminist theorists." Explain and assess this view.**

- (0–6) Lower in the band answers may be restricted to a few assertions about gender inequality. Better answers at this level may offer a simple account of gender socialisation with no further development in relation to the question.
- (7–12) At the lower end of the band, there may be a basic account of feminist theory in general. This type of response is likely to include little or no reference to the issue of social identity. Higher in the band, the focus may be on feminist accounts of how gender identity is constructed. An answer that outlines different strands of feminist theory could reach the top of the band, without focusing directly on issues of social identity. Answers at this level are likely to be mainly or wholly descriptive.
- (13–18) At this level, answers will provide a sound account of feminist theory and there will be particular reference to the social construction of gender identity. Lower in the band, the answers are likely to be confined to describing the feminist perspective (or different strands of feminist theory). To go higher, however, there must also be some attempt to assess the view that feminist theorists have over-emphasised the importance of gender as a factor influencing social identity. The assessment could be delivered in a number of ways, including through juxtaposing the feminist perspective with views on social identity from other perspectives, such as the functionalist and the Marxist. The analysis may lack depth at this level.
- (19–25) Answers at this level will demonstrate a good understanding of the feminist perspective on gender and social identity. References to different strands of feminist theory may be used to good effect in responding to the question. There will also be a sustained and incisive assessment of the view that feminist theorists have over-emphasised the importance of gender as a factor influencing social identity. Lower in the band, the assessment is likely to rely on the juxtaposition of different sociological perspectives on social identity. This might include references to the post-modernist critique of grand sociological narratives, such as traditional feminist theory. Higher in the band, the assessment may include a more direct analysis of the strengths and/or limitations of feminist views on gender and social identity. This might include references to, for example, new feminisms as a feature of post feminism or to the relevance for the question of recent sociological studies of masculinity. Good answers may also refer to philosophical debates about the role of determinism in sociological theory.

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## 2 Assess the positivist view that laws of society exist which govern human behaviour.

- (0–6) A limited attempt to define the notion of social laws would be worth two or three marks. A simple account of some aspects of positivism would trigger the top of the band.
- (7–12) A sound descriptive account of the positivist perspective in general, with no analysis of the concept of 'social laws', would merit the lower part of the band. Higher in the band there may be some attempt to contrast the positivist position with the interpretivist perspective, though this will be at a rather elementary level. Again, there may be no focus on the idea of law governed behaviour. Answers that are confined to an account of different models of science, with only loose links to the question, would fit the lower part of the band.
- (13–18) Answers at this level will demonstrate a sound understanding of both the positivist and anti-positivist positions. Lower in the band the response will still largely be descriptive and links to the idea of social laws may be rather basic. Higher in the band there will be an attempt to assess the view that laws of society exist that govern human behaviour, though the analysis may be rather basic.
- (19–25) Answers that merit this band will demonstrate a good understanding of the positivist and anti-positivist positions. There will be a clear attempt to assess positivist claims about 'laws of society'. Lower in the band, the assessment is likely to be delivered through contrasting the positivist and interpretivist views of human behaviour. Higher in the band, a wider range of points may feature, including possibly references to debates about determinism, free will, the post modernist critique of traditional sociology, and different ways of understanding the idea of social laws. Good use of the Realist perspective in delivering the assessment would also trigger the top half of the band.

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### Section B: Sociological Methods

#### 3 Assess the strengths and limitations of using *qualitative* secondary data, such as historical documents and diaries, in sociological research.

- (0–6) A few simple points about secondary data in general may be worth three or four marks. A basic attempt to distinguish between different types of secondary data would fit the top half of the band.
- (7–12) At the lower end of the band, answers may be limited to a few general points about the strengths and/or limitations of secondary data in general. Better responses at this level will distinguish between quantitative and qualitative forms of secondary data. There will also be an attempt to explain some of the strengths and limitations of qualitative secondary data, although the emphasis may be mainly practical factors rather than issues of theory. Answers at this level may be mainly or wholly descriptive.
- (13–18) Answers at this level will provide a sound account of the strengths and limitations of qualitative secondary data. Both practical and theoretical factors will be considered, though not necessarily with equal emphasis. Higher in the band, the handling of theory is likely to be more assured. To reach the top half of the band, there must also be an attempt to assess the overall value of using qualitative secondary data in sociological research. However, the assessment may lack depth at this level and is likely to be confined to a juxtaposition of the respective claims of quantitative versus qualitative research/data in sociology.
- (19–25) Answers that merit this band will demonstrate a good understanding of the strengths and limitations of qualitative secondary data. This might include references to particular types of qualitative secondary data, though equally the discussion may remain at a more general level. There will also be a sustained and well-informed assessment of the value of using qualitative secondary data in sociological research. Lower in the band, the assessment may rely mainly on a juxtaposition of arguments for qualitative versus quantitative research. Higher in the band, however, the assessment will be less generic and incisive points will emerge about the particular strengths and limitations of using qualitative secondary data. Common assumptions about the strengths and limitations of secondary data may also be challenged and debated. Answers that discuss the relative merits of different types of qualitative secondary data, as part of the overall response to the question, are likely to trigger the top half of the band.

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#### **4 Assess the arguments for using unstructured interviews in sociological research.**

- (0–6) A few simple comments about interviews in general might be worth 3 or 4 marks. A clear description of the different types of interview, with no further development in relation to the question, would trigger the top of the band.
- (7–12) A basic description of unstructured interviews as a research method, perhaps supported by references to one or two relevant studies, would be worth a mark in the lower half of the band. A broadly accurate account of a few strengths and limitations in using the unstructured interview approach would trigger the top part of the band. Answers at this level are likely to focus on practical strengths/limitations rather than explore some of the relevant theoretical issues.
- (13–18) A sound account of the strengths and limitations of unstructured interviews is required to reach this band. Lower in the band the treatment of theoretical issues may be lacking in detail and depth of understanding. Higher in the band, a full range of practical and theoretical strengths and limitations of unstructured interviews will be discussed. There will also be an attempt to assess the arguments for using unstructured interviews in sociological research, though the points made may be rather simple. One way of constructing the assessment would be to contrast unstructured interviews with structured interviews.
- (19–25) A good account of the strengths and limitations of unstructured interviews will be offered at this level. Both practical and theoretical issues will be addressed. There will also be a sustained attempt to assess the usefulness of unstructured interviews in sociological research. Lower in the band, the assessment may be confined to contrasting unstructured interviews with one or more other research methods, such as structured interviews. To go higher in the band, however, the assessment needs to include a more direct analysis of the value of using unstructured interviews in sociological research. This might include, for example, a discussion of research aims and values, reflections on the relationship between the researcher and the respondent, and issues of what constitutes good sociological research. Reward candidates who use references to relevant studies to show the type of context in which unstructured interviews might be a particularly appropriate choice of research method.

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### Section C: Social Differentiation and Stratification

**5 "Modern industrial societies are no more meritocratic today than they were in the nineteenth century, when Marx was writing about social inequality." Explain and assess this view.**

- (0–6) A few insubstantial comments about social class might be worth two or three marks. A response that demonstrates some knowledge of what a meritocracy involves, with no further development in relation to the question, would trigger the top of the band.
- (7–12) Answers that are confined to a basic account of Marx's theory of social class would trigger the lower part of the band. A basic, uncritical account of the meritocracy thesis, with no further development in relation to the question, would fit the top half of the band. Answers that rely on a description of recent evidence (or studies) about social inequality, with no clear links to relevant sociological theory, would also merit the top half of the band.
- (13–18) Answers at this level will demonstrate a sound understanding of what is meant by meritocracy. There will also be awareness of the contrasts between the idea of meritocracy and views about social inequality associated with Marx and other conflict theorists. Lower in the band, answers are likely to be confined to a basic descriptive account of some sources of social inequality that are to be found in modern industrial societies. To go higher in the band, however, there must also be some attempt to assess the view expressed in the question. This might take the form of a critique of the meritocracy thesis or a review of the relevance of Marx's ideas about class inequality for society today. The assessment may lack depth at this level.
- (19–25) Answers that merit this band will demonstrate a clear and detailed understanding of the debates about meritocracy and social inequality in modern industrial society. There will also be a sustained and well reasoned assessment of the view expressed in the question. Lower in the band, the assessment may be narrow in range or rely heavily on juxtaposition of contrasting views about the nature and extent of social inequality. Higher in the band, there will be evidence of a more sophisticated analysis, with balanced judgements emerging about how far social inequality has been reduced in modern industrial societies since the nineteenth century. Good answers may distinguish between different forms of social inequality. Empirical evidence about social inequality may also be used to support key points in well constructed answers.

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**6 "White middle class males in positions of power are the main obstacle to females achieving gender equality in modern industrial societies." Explain and assess this view.**

- (0–6) Lower in the band answers may be restricted to a few assertions about the nature of gender inequality. Better answers at this level may offer a simple explanation of why gender inequality exists, with no direct links to the question as such.
- (7–12) Answers that provide a basic account of **one** explanation of gender inequality, with little attempt to address the specific wording of the question, would trigger the lower part of the band. A basic account of more than one explanation of gender inequality could reach the top half of the band without addressing directly the issues of ethnicity, class and male power that the question raises. An answer that is confined to a basic summary of the importance of the concept of patriarchy in explaining gender inequality would fit the top of the band. Answers at this level are likely to be mainly or wholly descriptive.
- (13–18) Answers at this level will demonstrate a sound knowledge of the main sociological explanations for gender inequality. There will be some attempt to link the response to the reference to male power in the question, perhaps through consideration of the concept of patriarchy. Higher in the band, a wider range of sociological explanations for gender inequality will be considered or better conceptual understanding will be shown in discussing notions such as patriarchy, power and gender inequality. To reach the top half of the band, there must also be some attempt to assess the view expressed in the question, though the analysis at this level may lack depth.
- (19–25) Answers at this level will demonstrate a good understanding of a range of sociological explanations for gender inequality. The discussion will be linked directly to the issues of ethnicity, class and male power raised by the question. There will also be a sustained and well informed assessment of the view that the exercise of power by white, middle class males is the main obstacle to females achieving gender equality. Lower in the band, the assessment may be limited to a juxtaposition of contrasting views about the causes of gender inequality. Higher in the band, the assessment will include a more direct analysis of the extent to which male power is the main obstacle to gender equality. Towards the top of the band, we might also expect candidates to make some use of the reference to 'white, middle class males' in the question, perhaps by considering the extent to which the concept of patriarchy may be of value in analysing the behaviour of males from other types of social background.