

A LEVEL

Examiners' report

SOCIOLOGY

H580

For first teaching in 2015

H580/03 Autumn 2020 series

Introduction

Our examiners' reports are produced to offer constructive feedback on candidates' performance in the examinations. They provide useful guidance for future candidates.



Reports for the Autumn 2020 series will provide a broad commentary about candidate performance, with the aim for them to be useful future teaching tools. As an exception for this series they will not contain any questions from the question paper nor examples of candidate answers.

The reports will include a general commentary on candidates' performance, identify technical aspects examined in the questions and highlight good performance and where performance could be improved. The reports will also explain aspects which caused difficulty and why the difficulties arose, whether through a lack of knowledge, poor examination technique, or any other identifiable and explainable reason.

A full copy of the question paper and the mark scheme can be downloaded from OCR.

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Paper 3 series overview

Paper 3 is an option paper with a compulsory Section A, and then three options in Section B. The paper is demanding, with several different question styles, sources, and extended responses. Overall, the standard was not high in this series and the entry was very small.

Candidates who did well on this paper were able to showcase their knowledge and understanding and wrote in depth, utilising appropriate sociological evidence. Such candidates were also usually able to develop detailed evaluation points, and stay focused on the questions set. However, such responses were rare in this series.

There was often a lack of precise sociological knowledge, with many candidates unable to recall and apply appropriate sociological studies, even in Section B essays. Theoretical understanding was also often limited and confused. In Section A, few candidates used relevant contemporary examples, and many struggled to develop material in the sources beyond basic recycling.

<i>Candidates who did well on this paper generally did the following:</i>	<i>Candidates who did less well on this paper generally did the following:</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • selected and applied relevant sociological studies and concepts • responded to the questions set and focused their answers • included very clear and explicit evaluation where required. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • wrote more common-sense based/assertive points • struggled to focus on the precise questions set • demonstrated confusion between theories and studies used • lacked explicit and/or developed evaluation points in longer responses.

Section A overview - Globalisation and the digital social world

This section was generally completed to a reasonable standard.

Question 1

Most candidates did not go further than the examples contained within the sources. Better responses referred to the source(s) to illustrate their points but then developed these further with evidence, including studies (such as Sutton et al) and/ or specific examples. However, very few candidates referred to recent 'events' such as the coronavirus pandemic or the Black Lives Matter protests as examples in their responses, when such examples would have been creditable.

Note: despite the slightly different wording on Question 1 compared to previous series ('With reference to both sources' rather than 'With reference to the source(s)'), candidates who just referred to one of the sources (most likely Source A) were still fully credited.

Questions 2 and 3

Both questions were generally done well. Some candidates struggled to focus on the precise question. In Question 2 the focus should have been on the impact on 'identity', whereas many were referring more to relationships. Similarly, in Question 3, the focus should have been on 'relationships'. Some candidates just focused on positive and negative impacts in a more general way.

Some candidates are not including any/ enough evaluation – two points of evaluation are suggested for Question 2, and three points of evaluation for Question 3.

Key point call out

Questions that have the command terms "to what extent" (Q2) and "evaluate" (Q3) require students to show the skills of evaluation. Some students in these questions are not including any/ enough evaluation – two points of evaluation are suggested for Question 2, and three points of evaluation for Question 3.

Section B overview - Crime and Deviance

The standard of responses for this option topic was generally low.

Question 4



The focus on green crime as a 'growing issue' caused some problems. Examples were credited in the same way as sociological studies, but weaker responses tended to list types of green crime, which did not gain much credit.

Question 5

Evaluation often took the form of juxtaposition, merely presenting other explanations, such as left realist, Marxist or interactionist views, without making any attempt to show why such views would challenge the view in the question.

Question 6

Some responses struggled to include explicit evaluation, due to the nature of this question. However, if they directly contrasted competing explanations, they were credited in the way that most benefitted them. However, many weaker responses lacked depth of knowledge on explanations, with chivalry and labelling appearing the most, but often being written in a vague way and lacking substantiation.

	<p>Misconception</p>	<p>Almost all the responses to this question confused Right Realism with the New Right, using Murray and ideas on the underclass as their main knowledge points. While these were credited this time, it should be noted by centres that the New Right and Right Realism are distinct theories and should not be taught as interchangeable. Very few candidates used the ideas of Wilson, Wilson & Kelling or Hirschi.</p>
	<p>OCR support</p>	<p>Page 16 of the suggested studies guide lists the separate studies of Right Realism (Wilson, Wilson & Kelling, Wilson & Herrnstein) and the New Right (Murray, Murray and Herrnstein). Hirschi (also listed) can be seen as a Right Realist.</p>

Section B overview - Education

The standard of responses for this option topic was also quite low.

Question 7

Some candidates struggled to focus on attainment, and discussed issues such as subject choice or the hidden curriculum. Points must make some link back to attainment to be creditable.


Question 8

It was surprising that very few candidates seemed to know any studies on labelling, and most could not make any link to Interactionism. Some focused on studies relating to ethnicity or gender, and some used studies which were not actually about labelling though claimed that they were – such as Willis.

Evaluation often took the form of juxtaposition, merely presenting other explanations such as cultural or material deprivation, without making any attempt to show why such views would challenge the view in the question.

Question 9

Most candidates recognised the ideas of Durkheim, Parsons and Davis & Moore as being the most relevant, with some also applying New Right ideas and/ or linking to policies relating to vocationalism. However, the link to work was often not well developed, and the precision and accuracy with which these ideas were presented varied. Evaluation was often through juxtaposition, without direct evaluative links being made.

	Misconception	Some candidates included very dated material, such as 1970s and 80s feminist studies explaining female underachievement (e.g. Spender), with no apparent awareness that females no longer underachieve. The relevance of teaching such material must be called into question.
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Section B overview - Religion, belief and faith

There were very few responses for this topic. Questions were generally done well, though issues of detail and focus, and problems with juxtaposition were also seen in this topic.

Question 10

Good comparisons between the US and UK were seen.

Question 11

Feminist views were sometimes discussed interchangeably with views on gender and religiosity, which are not necessarily the same thing. Evaluation had a tendency to be via juxtaposition.

Question 12

Most focused well on this debate, though weaker responses changed the focus to whether religion was good or bad, instead of the secularisation debate.


Key teaching and learning points – comments on improving performance

Use past papers to encourage students to focus on the precise wording of the question. This would also help students decode questions and understand the command terms and when they need to evaluate.

Make sure that in the 'Globalisation and digital social world' topic, issues of identity, relationships and inequality are differentiated and considered separately.

Encourage students to be clear on the different theoretical views within each aspect of their topics, and to have some names to go with each view.

Highlight the difference between juxtaposition and direct evaluation. Merely presenting alternative views, even with the addition of the word 'however' before them is not good evaluation. Students need to practise picking out the differences between different theories, and showing how each would challenge the others.

	<p>AfL</p>	<p>Practise developing direct evaluation skills in a debate style format; one student or group presents a view and others, designated to different theories, must directly challenge and argue with them.</p>
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Guidance on using this paper as a mock

Consider the wording in Question 1 – this could be amended for use with students so the Question 1 could say, as it will in all future exams, 'With reference to the source(s)'.

This paper could be used as a full mock exam for students or could be split into sections to practise with the candidates after they have completed a section of the course. For example, Section A of this paper could be used after teaching the Globalisation and Digital Social World.

This paper would also be useful to use as a full mock at the end of the two year course since it will help to highlight the key issues and assessment skills of question focus, theoretical confusion and evaluation.

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