

Qualification awaiting accreditation

Sample assessment material

A Level

Sociology

Cambridge OCR Level 3 Advanced GCE in Sociology

H583/02

Version 0.1 | May 2026
ocr.org.uk/Sociology

Introduction

This sample assessment material (SAM) is an example exam paper published alongside the specification. It's designed to show the style and structure you can expect from our question papers.

As the qualification develops, we may update the question paper template. To make sure you're working with the most up-to-date information, we recommend using the latest set of past papers where possible.

To help you get the most from this SAM, we also provide two supporting resources:

- **Assessment story** – this explains the research behind the qualification and how feedback from teachers, students and schools has shaped our assessment approach.
- **Annotated SAMs** – these guide you through the key features of the assessment and highlight the different types of questions students will encounter in the exam.

Summary of updates

Section	Change	Version	Date
-	Creation of sample assessment materials	0.1	May 2026



Sample Question Paper

Cambridge OCR Level 3 Advanced GCE in Sociology

H583/02 Researching and understanding social inequalities

Time allowed: 1 hour 30 minutes

You must have:

- the OCR 12-page Answer Booklet

INSTRUCTIONS

- Use black ink.
- Write your answer to each question in the Answer Booklet. The question numbers must be clearly shown.
- Fill in the boxes on the front of the Answer Booklet.
- Answer **all** the questions.

INFORMATION

- The total mark for this paper is **70**.
- The marks for each question are shown in brackets [].
- Quality of extended response will be assessed in questions marked with an asterisk (*).
- Synopticity will be assessed in the final question in Section B marked with a hashtag (#).
- This document has **4** pages.

ADVICE

- Read each question carefully before you start your answer.



Section A

Answer all questions

- 1 Outline what is meant by reliability in research methods.

You **must** use an example to support your answer.

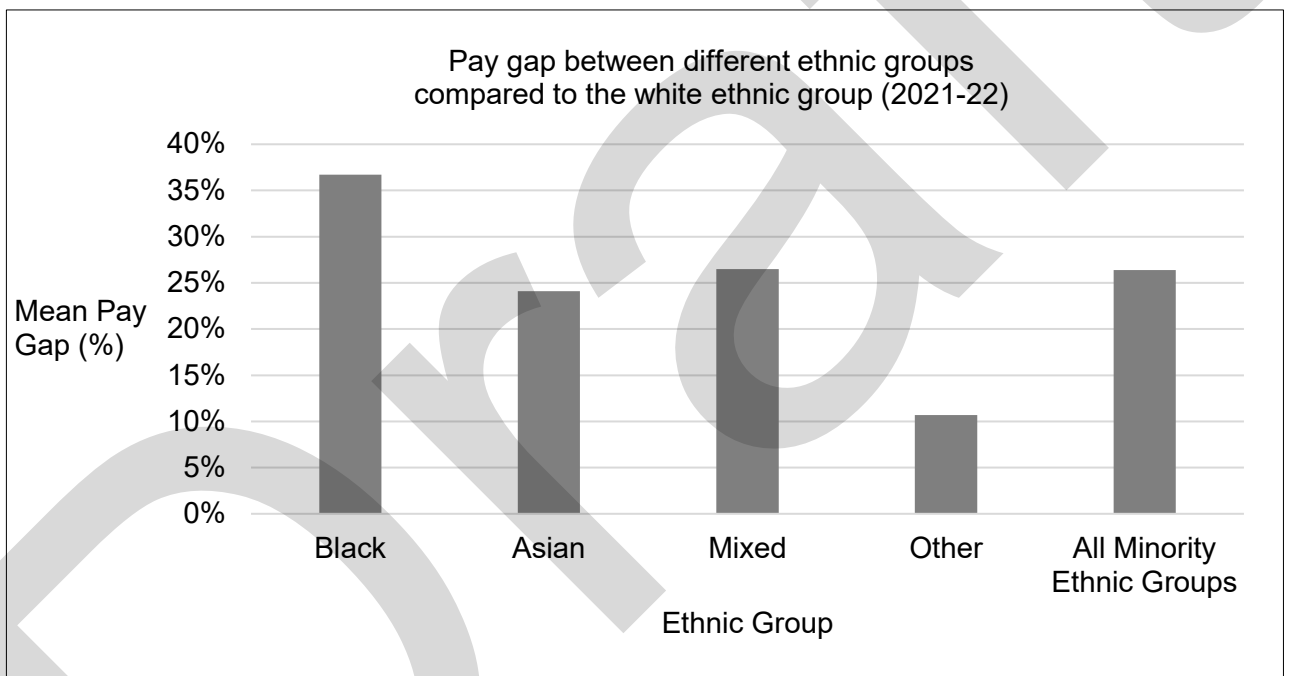
[5]

- 2 Outline the use of questionnaires in sociology.

You **must** use an example to support your answer.

[5]

Source A



Source A shows data from the data in the Ethnicity Pay Gap Report published in March 2023 by the Competition and Markets Authority and found on the www.gov.uk website.

It shows the mean difference or 'gap' in the hourly rate of pay between different ethnic groups and the white ethnic group over a one-year period between March 2021 and March 2022.

- 3 Explain **two** reasons why official statistics are useful for studying **current** ethnic inequalities in pay.

You **must** use evidence from **Source A** to support each reason.

[10]

- 4* How far are unstructured interviews more effective than structured interviews for understanding social inequalities relating to the gender pay gap?

You **must** use your knowledge of sociological research methods to support your answer. [20]

Draft

Section B

- 5 Explain **two** ways sociologists could investigate how social stratification can affect contemporary social inequalities.

You **must** use your knowledge of sociological research methods to support your answer. [10]

- 6# How far has patriarchy caused inequality between women and men?

You **must** use your knowledge and understanding from across the full course of study when answering this question. [20]

END OF QUESTION PAPER



CAMBRIDGE OCR

Sample Mark Scheme

Cambridge OCR Level 3 Advanced GCE in Sociology
H583/02 Component Title: Researching and understanding social inequalities

Mark Scheme

Duration: 1 hour 30 minutes

Maximum Mark: 70

**Version
Sample**

This document has 29 pages.

Marking Instructions

Preparation For Marking

1. RM Assessor

- Access and complete the on-screen marking training packages: OCR Examiner Training (RMA3).
- Read the mark scheme and question paper for this component or unit.
- The mark scheme and question paper are available in RM Assessor or on your Component Page if you use the Training Platform for standardisation.
- Log in to RM Assessor and mark the **required number** of practice scripts and the **required number** of standardisation scripts.

Marking

2. General Guidance

- Mark strictly to the mark scheme.
- Marks awarded must relate directly to the marking criteria.
- If you are in any doubt about applying the mark scheme, consult your Team Leader by phone, email or via the RM Assessor messaging system.
- It is **essential** that you meet the RM Assessor 50% and 100% batch deadlines. For traditional marking this will be 40% and 100%. If you experience problems, contact your Team Leader without delay.
- Always check the pages (and additional objects if present) at the end of the response in case any answers have been continued there. If the candidate has continued an answer there, then add the annotation '**SEEN**' to confirm that the work has been seen and mark any responses using the RM annotations.

- The RM Assessor **comments box** is used by your Team Leader to explain the marking of the practice responses. Use these comments when checking your practice responses. **Do not use the comments box for any other reason.**
- **Before the end of the marking period** send a brief report on the performance of candidates to your Team Leader via email. The report should contain notes on strengths displayed as well as common errors or weaknesses. Constructive criticism of the question paper/mark scheme is also appreciated.

3. No Response and Crossed-out Answers

Using the No Response (NR) option. Only mark as NR if:

- the answer space is blank
- there is only a comment not related to the question (e.g., 'can't do', 'don't know')
- there is only a mark (e.g., a dash, a question mark) which is not an attempt at the question.

Note: Enter 0 marks for an attempt that earns no credit (including copying out the question). Do **not** use NR.

Crossed-out answers

If a candidate has crossed out an answer and written a clear alternative, do **not** mark the crossed-out answer.

If a candidate has crossed out an answer and **not** written a clear alternative, mark the crossed-out answer if it is readable.

4. Responses with more answers than needed

- **Multiple-choice question answers**

When a multiple-choice question has only **one** correct answer and a candidate has written two or more answers (even if one of these answers is correct), do **not** award a mark.

When a multiple-choice question asks candidates to select **more than** one option the marking guidance from your Principal Examiner will ensure consistency of approach.

- **Contradictory answers in points-based questions**

Do **not** award any marks, even if one of the answers is correct.

- **Rubric error answers – optional questions**

Where candidates have a choice of question/s and they provide more answers than required, all responses are marked and entered into RM Assessor. The highest mark allowable within the rubric will automatically be selected.

- **Questions that ask for a set number (including 1) of short answers or points**

Mark only the **first set number** of answers/points. (e.g. **two** reasons for something)

First mark the answers/points against printed numbers on the answer lines. Mark the first answer/point against each printed number.

Second, if candidates have not followed the printed numbers, mark the answers/points from left to right on each line. **Third**, mark line by line until the set number of answers/points have been marked. Do **not** mark any remaining answers/points.

Examiners should use their own judgement to decide if a 'second answer' on the same line is adding more detail to the first answer, or if it is a completely separate answer.

- **Short Answer Questions (requiring a more developed response, worth two or more marks)**

If the candidates are required to provide a description of, for example, three items and four items are provided, mark line by line until the set number of descriptions have been marked (it is unlikely a candidate will provide more than one response on each line in this scenario).

- **Longer Answer Questions (requiring a developed response)**

If a candidate has written two or more answers to a question that only requires one (developed) answer, only mark the first answer (which has not been crossed out).

5. Questions using levels of response (LOR):

To determine the **level** – start at the highest level and work down until you reach the level that matches the answer.

To determine the **mark** within the level, use the following:

Descriptor	Award mark
Consistently meets the criteria for this level	At top of level
Meets the criteria but with some slight inconsistency	Above middle and either below top of level or at middle of level (depending on number of marks available)
Just enough achievement on balance for this level	Above bottom and either below middle or at middle of level (depending on number of marks available)
On the borderline of this level and the one below	At bottom of level

6. Subject-specific Marking Instructions

Introduction

Your first task is to familiarise yourself with:

- the specification, especially the assessment objectives
- the question paper and any inserts or resource booklets
- the mark scheme, including annotation requirements
- the administrative procedures related to the marking process.

The administrative procedures are set out in the Cambridge OCR booklet **Instructions for Examiners**.

If you are examining for the first time, please read **Appendix 5 Introduction to Script Marking: Notes for New Examiners**.

All relevant training materials are accessed from the Training Platform.

Please ask for help or guidance whenever you need it. Your first point of contact is your Team Leader.

AO guide

AO1: Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of:

- sociological theories, concepts and evidence
- sociological research methods.

The focus of this AO is to assess students' ability to recall and demonstrate understanding of sociological terminology, theories, concepts, evidence, and/or research methods. Questions may focus on factual recall and require a clear explanation of a sociological concept or study. Question papers 01 and 03 will primarily focus on theories, concepts and evidence; question paper 02 will primarily focus on research methods. Marks are allocated for accuracy, clarity, and appropriate use of sociological language, without the need for application or contextualisation, unless the question is designed to target multiple assessment objectives.

AO2: Apply sociological theories, concepts, evidence and research methods to a range of issues;

The focus of this AO is to assess students' ability to apply sociological theories, concepts, evidence and/or research methods to a range of issues. Questions target the student's capacity to select and use relevant sociological material to address the specific demands of the question. Question papers 01 and 03 will primarily focus on theories, concepts and evidence; question paper 02 will primarily focus on research methods. Marks are allocated for the relevance and appropriateness of the material applied, and the extent to which it is used to support or develop a sociological response, rather than for explanation or evaluation alone. In sociology the 'issue' will either be drawn from the question and the provided source, or the issue will be the question itself, and the student will need to apply knowledge and understanding to it. This AO will never be targeted in isolation and typically responses will be applying relevant knowledge and understanding to the given issue.

AO3: Analyse and evaluate sociological theories, concepts, evidence and research methods in order to:

- present arguments
- make judgements
- draw conclusions.

The focus of this AO is to assess students' ability to analyse and evaluate sociological theories, concepts, evidence, and research methods in order to present arguments, make judgements, and draw conclusions. Questions require students to consider different viewpoints, strengths and limitations, or the significance of evidence and ideas. Question papers 01 and 03 will primarily focus on theories, concepts and evidence; question paper 02 will primarily focus on research methods. Marks are allocated for the clarity, coherence, and depth of the analysis and evaluation, as well as the ability to construct a reasoned argument or conclusion in response to the question. This should be a final verdict on

the overall question rather than summarising it and does not require introducing new evidence. The conclusion should synthesise the main points and highlight the significance of what is being argued directly linked to the question.

As per AO1 and AO2, except for the synoptic question, items will not target theories, concepts and evidence, with research methods. This AO will never be targeted in isolation.

NB: Sociological material in mark schemes refers to sociological theories, concepts and evidence.

Indicative content:

Indicative content provides ideas for content that might be covered, and this is approached in two ways.

1. A list of relevant knowledge that might be used and/or evaluated (this list is not exhaustive and any relevant information should be credited).
2. Exemplar responses, linked to assessment objectives.

It is important to note that exemplar responses are not intended to represent a full answer to any question. They are intended as a guide to examiners as to what and how students might approach the required skill in a given question. These have been designed to replicate this skill in a clear and obvious manner, without being representative of any specific level of response. Examiners will mark the response in line with levels of response marking criteria. The use of indicating where in the exemplar and assessment objective has been met is not intended to highlight the awarding of individual marks. Whilst there is no set amount of points a student may cover within any response, guidance is provided on what would typically be expected to ensure there is enough breadth in a given response. Examiners will mark any reasonable response, regardless of where from the specification the content is drawn from and whilst synoptic assessment is only assessed in section B of this question paper, providing the response is valid and answers the question set, the response will be awarded and indicative content may reflect this on occasion. All responses should be linked to the focus of the question and the weighting of the assessment objectives.

Quality of Extended Response

Quality of extended response is included as part of AO3 in non-synoptic 20-mark questions. Wording in italics within the marking grids highlights the expectation:

Level	Marking Criteria (AO3)
4	<i>There is a well-developed and sustained line of reasoning which is clear, coherent and logically structured. Information presented is relevant/appropriate and substantiated/supported by evidence.</i>
3	<i>There is a line of reasoning presented which is reasonably coherent with some structure. Information presented is mostly relevant/appropriate and mostly substantiated/supported by evidence.</i>
2	<i>The response has limited structure. Information presented is sometimes relevant/appropriate and sometimes substantiated/supported by evidence.</i>
1	<i>The response is poorly structured. Information presented is rarely relevant/appropriate and unlikely to be substantiated/supported by evidence.</i>

How examiners award quality of extended response

Level 4: At this level, the answer shows a well-developed and sustained line of reasoning that is clear, coherent and logically structured throughout. The argument flows logically from one point to the next, with each paragraph building on the previous one. The response stays focused on the question at all times. Information is relevant and appropriate, and points are supported with accurate sociological evidence, studies, concepts or examples. Evidence is used to strengthen the argument rather than simply being added on. Overall, the writing demonstrates strong organisation, clarity and control, with a convincing and well-supported line of reasoning.

Level 3: At this level, the answer presents a line of reasoning that is reasonably coherent and shows some clear structure. The argument makes sense overall, although it may not be fully sustained or consistently developed. Most of the information included is relevant to the question and is mostly supported by appropriate sociological evidence or examples. There may be some points that are less clearly linked or less fully evidenced. The response shows logical thinking, but with less consistency and depth than Level 4.

Level 2: At this level, the response has limited structure and may feel uneven or loosely organised. A line of reasoning may be present, but it is not clearly sustained or logically developed. Information is sometimes relevant to the question, but there may be sections that drift away from the focus. Evidence is used inconsistently – some points may be supported, while others are not clearly substantiated. The overall argument lacks clarity and development.

Level 1: At this level, the response is poorly structured and lacks a clear line of reasoning. Ideas may be listed rather than developed into a logical argument. Information included is rarely relevant to the question and is unlikely to be supported by appropriate sociological evidence. There is little organisation or coherence, and the argument, if present, is unclear or unsupported. Overall, the quality of extended response is very limited.

Synoptic Questions

Synoptic assessment will always be the final question in this question paper. It is the students' understanding of the connections between different elements of the subject. It draws together the knowledge, understanding and skills learnt through study across the A Level Sociology course.

Synoptic assessment includes the explicit assessment of understanding of the connections between the nature of sociological thought; methods of sociological enquiry; and the two core themes using higher order skills.

Synoptic learning in sociology engages students in theoretical debate while encouraging an active involvement in the research process. It fosters a critical awareness of contemporary social processes and change.

Students will be able to draw upon their knowledge gained throughout the course of study and apply it to a given context. The focus should also be on the evidence used by sociologists and how effective this is as part of their evaluation.

Synoptic assessment in A Level Sociology requires students to construct extended responses that demonstrate integrated understanding across the course. Students must use relevant sociological theories, concepts and evidence to address the question, ensuring that their knowledge is accurate, applied appropriately and clearly explained. This includes drawing on key perspectives, debates and empirical studies from the specification to support arguments. This may also include the evaluation of how sociologists have researched the evidence being used. This may involve discussing issues such as validity, reliability, representativeness, ethics or researcher bias, drawing explicitly on their knowledge from the Research Methods component. In doing so, students demonstrate an understanding of how sociological knowledge is produced and how methodological choices shape findings and interpretations.

Students must also make clear synoptic links to other areas of sociology they have studied. This means connecting ideas across at least two components of the course. These links should be purposeful and analytical rather than superficial, showing how theories, concepts or patterns in one area help to explain, challenge or deepen understanding in another. Synoptic assessment does not require students to cover all themes in one answer, but it does require meaningful connections across two or more.

Finally, students must come to a reasoned conclusion. This should weigh up the arguments presented, reflect on the strength of the evidence and its methodological foundations, and directly answer the question set. A strong conclusion demonstrates synthesis: it brings together theory, evidence, methodological evaluation and synoptic links to present a clear, justified overall judgement.

These questions will always use the stem 'How far'.

All three assessment objectives are targeted in this question type.

Students are required to use their knowledge and understanding of sociological theories, concepts and evidence, applied to a given issue, before considering the strengths and weaknesses and coming to a conclusion, using knowledge and understanding drawn from across the full course of study.

Assessment Objectives should be marked at each level independently. For example, it is possible that a student can attain a Level 4 response for AO1 knowledge and understanding, but only a Level 2 response for AO2 application.

Marks should be awarded in line with the qualitative descriptors in the marking criteria to reflect the depth of knowledge and understanding.

No set amount of points are required, though as a guide, to reflect the range of their knowledge, a student would typically provide at least four discussion points.

At the highest level, students will be rewarded for their ability to draw together relevant knowledge skills and understanding.

Marking Grids and Indicative Content

Section A

Q1 Outline what is meant by reliability in research methods. You must use an example to support your answer. [5]
AO1 Knowledge and Understanding (AO1 x 5)
<p>1 mark – Brief outline given. 1 mark – The outline is fully developed/further elaborated. 1 mark – An accurate example is provided. 1 mark – The example given is detailed 1 mark – A clear link is made between the example and the key concept/question.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In research methods, reliability means the consistency, stability and repeatability of a measure or study. (1) • A reliable research method produces the same, or similar results under the same conditions over time, ensuring results are not coincidental. (1) • The Census is considered a reliable and longitudinal research method and is undertaken by the ONS every 10 years, giving a comprehensive picture of all the people and households in England and Wales. (1) • It is a legal requirement to take part in the Census. The data is used to ensure service requirements such as transport and education are met. (1) • The compulsory nature and legal requirement of the Census, makes it a reliable source of data for the Government and voluntary sectors to make informed decisions on factors that may influence social policy and decision making. As a mandatory research method, the high response rate ensures reliability and no-response bias. • Any other reasonable response.

Q2 Outline the use of questionnaires in sociology. You must use an example to support your answer. [5]
AO1 Knowledge and Understanding (AO1 x 5)
1 mark – Brief outline given. 1 mark – The outline is fully developed/further elaborated. 1 mark – An accurate example is provided. 1 mark – The example given is detailed 1 mark – A clear link is made between the example and the key concept/question.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Questionnaires are widely used as a research method in sociology and are the main method for collecting data in social surveys.• Questionnaires are lists of questions, sometimes open, but usually closed, and produce mainly quantitative data that is preferred by positivists.• One example is the Breadline Britain surveys, which consisted of self-report questionnaires conducted over several decades.• Participants were asked to identify which items and activities they considered necessities for living in Britain, from a list of 44 possibilities. The questionnaire also included questions on other aspects of living standards and attitudes to poverty.• The questionnaires were useful as they revealed patterns and trends in poverty and showed that definitions of poverty must change to reflect societal expectations of minimal living standards.• Any other reasonable response.

Q3 Explain two reasons why official statistics are useful for studying current ethnic inequalities in pay. You must use evidence from Source A to support each reason. [10]		
Level	AO1 Knowledge and Understanding (AO1 x 4)	AO2 Application (AO2 x 6)
4	4 marks Responses demonstrate clear, accurate and detailed knowledge of sociological research methods. Both points are developed, with each explained fully and consistently.	5–6 marks Sociological research methods from the source are applied directly, precisely and consistently to the demands of the question, addressing both points effectively.
3	3 marks Responses demonstrate generally accurate and relevant knowledge of sociological research methods, with some detail. Both points are covered, though development may be uneven, with one point explained more effectively than the other.	3–4 marks Sociological research methods from the source are applied appropriately to the question, with clear relevance to both points, though precision and consistency will be less secure than at Level 4.
2	2 marks Responses show limited knowledge of sociological research methods, which may include inaccuracies and little detail. Both points are identified, though they are underdeveloped and unevenly explained. Or one point might be well explained, but the other absent.	2 marks There is an attempt to apply sociological research methods from the source, but application is weak, inconsistent or only partially relevant across both points. One point may be applied more effectively but the other absent.
1	1 mark Responses demonstrate basic or inconsistent knowledge of sociological research methods, which is often unclear or inaccurate. One point may be identified but is weakly or minimally addressed.	1 mark Application of sociological research methods from the source/item is minimal, tangential or largely irrelevant, with little clear connection to the question.
0	0 marks No creditworthy response.	0 marks No creditworthy response.

Q3 Explain two reasons why official statistics are useful for studying current ethnic inequalities in pay. You must use evidence from Source A to support each reason. [10]

AO1 (4 marks): Students should show knowledge and understanding of relevant sociological research methods dealing with the issue of the use of official statistics for studying current ethnic inequalities in pay.

AO2 (6 marks): Students should be using knowledge and understanding to explicitly address the issue of the use of official statistics for studying current ethnic inequalities in pay.

Marks should be awarded in line with the qualitative descriptors in the marking criteria to reflect the depth of knowledge and understanding. Assessment Objectives should be marked at each level independently. For example, it is possible that a student can attain a Level 4 response for AO1 knowledge and understanding, but only a Level 2 response for AO2 application.

Candidates who only provide one reason (and therefore don't fully respond to the demands of the question) are limited to Level 2 (for both AO1 and AO2).

NB: Marks for AO2 can only be awarded for explicit use of the source material.

Relevant points students might use in their answer include:

- Reliability
- Standardised procedures
- Operationalisation
- Representativeness
- Generalisability
- Value-freedom
- Objectivity
- Patterns and trends
- Joseph Rowntree Foundation, ONS, Rowlinson and McKay - effects of ethnicity on wealth inequality, positivism - patterns and trends, qualitative data.

Exemplar response

- One reason official statistics are useful is that they provide quantitative data, which helps show patterns and trends, such as ethnic inequalities in pay. Quantitative data is favoured by Positivists as they offer a more scientific understanding of ethnic inequalities in pay and are seen to be high in reliability. By identifying these patterns, researchers can make comparisons and find correlations. This makes the research more scientific and allows sociologists to track changes over time and assess the impact of workplace practices and policies. The Joseph Rowntree Foundation found that all ethnic minorities have lower earnings with comparable white groups (AO1). Source A shows how the Ethnicity Pay Gap Report has used quantitative data to measure differences in average hourly pay between ethnic groups and the white ethnic group within organisations. For example, it reports a 37% mean pay gap between black ethnic groups and the white group. These official statistics clearly show significant pay inequalities. Because the data is from 2021–22, it gives sociologists an up-to-date snapshot of ethnic pay gaps. This quantitative and comparative data provides measurable evidence of structural inequality in the labour market. As the data is standardised, sociologists can compare results across organisations and over time to see whether inequalities are widespread, increasing, or decreasing. If the 37% figure changes in later years, researchers can investigate the reasons for this. The correlations can be used to establish ‘social facts’ or ‘laws’ (AO2).
- Any other reasonable response.

Q4* How far are unstructured interviews more effective than structured interviews for understanding social inequalities relating to the gender pay gap? You must use your knowledge of sociological research methods to support your answer. [20]			
Level	AO1 Knowledge and Understanding (AO1 x 4)	AO2 Application (AO2 x 6)	AO3 Analysis and Evaluation (AO3 x 10)
4	4 marks Responses demonstrate clear, accurate and detailed knowledge of sociological research methods. A range of points from both sides of the view are developed, with each explained fully and consistently.	5–6 marks Sociological research methods are applied directly, precisely and consistently to the demands of the question, addressing all points effectively.	8–10 marks A range of points from both sides are analysed and evaluated in full. Sociological research methods are used to construct a coherent and sustained argument, weighing strengths and weaknesses, comparing perspectives and/or evidence in making sound judgements and leading to a clear, logical and well-supported conclusion. <i>There is a well-developed and sustained line of reasoning which is clear, coherent and logically structured. Information presented is relevant/appropriate and substantiated/supported by evidence.</i>
3	3 marks Responses demonstrate generally accurate and relevant knowledge of sociological research methods, with some detail. A range of points from both sides of view are covered, though development may be uneven, with some points explained more effectively than others.	3–4 marks Sociological research methods are applied appropriately to the question, with clear relevance to the points made, though precision and consistency will be less secure than at Level 4.	5–7 marks A range of points from both sides are analysed and evaluated. Sociological research methods are used to develop a reasoned argument, considering strengths and weaknesses and making some comparison of perspectives and/or evidence in making a reasonable judgement, leading to a partially developed conclusion. Arguments made at this level will lack the development of level 4 responses or provide an uneven treatment of the points raised. <i>There is a line of reasoning presented which is reasonably coherent with some structure. Information presented is mostly relevant/appropriate and mostly substantiated/supported by evidence.</i>
2	2 marks Responses show limited knowledge of sociological research methods, which may include inaccuracies and little detail. More than one point is included, though these are underdeveloped and unevenly explained.	2 marks There is an attempt to apply sociological research methods, but application is weak, inconsistent or only partially relevant across more than one point. Precision and consistency will be limited at this level.	3–4 marks Points are limited in analysis and evaluation. Sociological research methods are used to construct arguments is sometimes relevant but may be descriptive and/or superficial. Judgements may rely on assertion and may not compare both sides of arguments. Conclusions, if present, are unclear, unsupported or illogical. Arguments at this level will lack the more consistent analysis and depth of level 3 responses. <i>The response has limited structure. Information presented is sometimes relevant/appropriate and sometimes substantiated/supported by evidence.</i>
1	1 mark Responses demonstrate basic knowledge of sociological research methods, which is often unclear or inaccurate. One or more points may be identified but are weakly or minimally addressed.	1 mark Application of sociological research methods is minimal, tangential or largely irrelevant, with little clear connection to the question.	1–2 marks Points demonstrate limited or no effective evaluation of sociological research methods. If present, evidence will be anecdotal and/or common sense and lack relevance. Comments are typically assertive or unsupported, with little or no analysis. Conclusions, if present, are brief, unclear and unsupported. Arguments at this level will lack appropriate structure and evidence of level 2 responses. <i>The response is poorly structured. Information presented is rarely relevant/appropriate and unlikely to be substantiated/ supported by evidence.</i>
0	0 marks No creditworthy response.	0 marks No creditworthy response.	0 marks No creditworthy response.

Q4* How far are unstructured interviews more effective than structured interviews for understanding social inequalities relating to the gender pay gap? You must use your knowledge of sociological research methods to support your answer. [20]

AO1 (4 marks): Students should show knowledge and understanding of relevant sociological research methods dealing with social inequalities relating to the gender pay gap.

AO2 (6 marks): Students should be using knowledge and understanding to explicitly address the issue of social inequalities relating to the gender pay gap.

AO3 (10 marks): Students should analyse and evaluate the selected theories, concepts and evidence to present arguments, make judgements and draw conclusions to address the issue of social inequalities relating to the gender pay gap.

Assessment Objectives should be marked at each level independently. For example, it is possible that a student can attain a Level 4 response for AO1 knowledge and understanding, but only a Level 2 response for AO2 application.

No set amount of points are required, though as a guide, to reflect the range of their knowledge, a student would typically provide at least four discussion points.

A student would be expected to focus most of their answer on AO3 because it carries the highest marks. This means that after showing they understand the relevant material (AO1) and applying it correctly to the issue in the question (AO2), they must demonstrate analysis and evaluation.

Student responses must move beyond describing ideas and show critical thinking throughout, because this is where the 10 AO3 marks are awarded.

Total marks for AO3 are broken down as follows:

- present arguments = 4 marks
- make judgements = 4 marks
- draw conclusions = 2 marks.

Examiners will use a best fit approach when deciding which level a student response falls into based on the level descriptors, but to be awarded in the top levels, all three elements must be present.

In addition, these questions will target quality of extended response, which is indicated in the question paper with an asterisk (*) and in the marking grids using italicised wording.

NB: for AO2 marks to be awarded answers must be applied to the issue in the question.

Relevant Knowledge, understanding and evidence students might use in their answer includes:

- Validity
- Rapport
- Verstehen
- Participant control over content
- Uncover meanings, values, attitudes, opinions and beliefs
- Reflexivity
- Respondent validation
- Ethics
- Ethnographic, interpretivist, positivist, interviewer bias, Weber
- Flexibility
- Subjective.

Exemplar response

- Unstructured interviews are informal and offer flexibility and depth when used in the research process. The interviewer is not restricted to a fixed set of questions and instead asks open questions, allowing them to ask follow-up questions based on respondents' answers. (AO1) Open-ended questioning allows respondents to speak openly of their experiences of social inequalities relating to the gender pay gap. The approach may reveal issues or perspectives the interviewer had not originally considered and provide detailed insights into individuals' experiences and develop a more nuanced understanding of pay inequality. These opportunities would not be present with structured interviews. As a result, the interviewer can gain insight into how the gender pay gap operates in everyday life. (AO2) However, open questions also risk potential interviewer bias. The interviewer may ask leading questions which reduces objectivity and potentially invalidates the research findings. (AO3)
- Unstructured interviews encourage rapport between the interviewer and the respondent. They are often associated with ethnographic research, as they are spontaneous and usually take place in familiar environments, helping respondents feel comfortable. This creates the best opportunity to achieve Weber's concept of verstehen meaning empathetic understanding, as participants are more likely to speak honestly and openly. (AO1) This approach allows researchers to gain a deeper understanding of individuals' experiences of social inequalities relating to the gender pay gap. Because the pay gap can be subtle or hidden, developing verstehen helps uncover the underlying mechanisms behind pay differences rather than simply identifying that differences exist. (AO2) However, verstehen has been criticised for reducing impartiality and increasing the risk of interviewer bias. For example, the interviewer may ask leading questions or become overly sympathetic towards the respondent, which can reduce objectivity and potentially undermine the validity of the research findings. (AO3)
- Unstructured interviews are favoured by Interpretivists because their informal nature produces qualitative data. This type of data is collected directly from research participants and includes their concepts, emotions, and experiences, reflecting how they interpret events in

their social world. (AO1) This approach is particularly effective for exploring individuals' experiences of social inequalities and the gender pay gap. It provides rich, in-depth insights into participants' feelings and perspectives, increasing the validity of the findings in a way that quantitative methods may not achieve. (AO2) However, Positivists criticise unstructured interviews for lacking objectivity and being prone to bias. They argue that questions should be neutral, whereas open-ended questions may lead respondents towards answers. Positivists instead prefer quantitative data, which is numerical and can be used to identify patterns in social inequalities such as the gender pay gap. This type of data is seen as more generalisable. (AO3)

- Unstructured interviews are often seen as more effective than structured interviews when researching sensitive topics. They take the form of informal conversations, allowing interviewees to guide the discussion and choose how much they wish to disclose. This flexibility also enables the interviewer to address ethical considerations, such as confidentiality, and provide support where needed. (AO1) In the context of social inequalities and the gender pay gap, this approach is particularly useful because it creates a safe and open environment. Participants may be more willing to discuss sensitive experiences and are less likely to give socially desirable answers, leading to more honest and valid data about their experiences. (AO2) However, critics argue that unstructured interviews lack reliability because they are not standardised and therefore cannot be easily replicated. In contrast, structured interviews use fixed questions, making it easier to compare responses across participants. Additionally, structured interviews may avoid potentially uncomfortable topics, whereas unstructured interviews depend on the skill of the interviewer to manage sensitive discussions appropriately. (AO3)
- In conclusion, there are strengths and weaknesses of unstructured interviews; for example, the in-depth analysis acquired versus the time required to collect the data. In the final analysis, mixing data sets by adopting a 'mixed methods' approach of qualitative and quantitative data, may yield more complete evidence, offsetting some of the limitations of using only one method. Combining unstructured and structured interviews when researching the gender pay gap, would potentially offer a more comprehensive understanding of the issue overall.
- Any other reasonable response.

Section B

Q5 Explain two ways sociologists could investigate how social stratification can affect contemporary social inequalities. You must use your knowledge of sociological research methods to support your answer. [10]		
Level	AO1 Knowledge and Understanding (AO1 x 4)	AO2 Application (AO2 x 6)
4	4 marks Responses demonstrate clear, accurate and detailed knowledge of sociological research methods. Both points are developed, with each explained fully and consistently.	5–6 marks Sociological research methods are applied directly, precisely and consistently to the issue in the question, addressing both points effectively.
3	3 marks Responses demonstrate generally accurate and relevant knowledge of sociological research methods, with some detail. Both points are covered, though development may be uneven, with one point explained more effectively than the other.	3–4 marks Sociological research methods are applied appropriately to the issue in the question, with clear relevance to both points, though precision and consistency will be less secure than at Level 4.
2	2 marks Responses show limited knowledge of sociological research methods, which may include inaccuracies and little detail. Both points are identified, though they are underdeveloped and unevenly explained. Or one point might be well explained, but the other absent.	2 marks There is an attempt to apply sociological research methods from the source, but application is weak, inconsistent or only partially relevant across both points. One point may be applied more effectively but the other absent.
1	1 mark Responses demonstrate basic or inconsistent knowledge of sociological research methods, which is often unclear or inaccurate. One point may be identified but is weakly or minimally addressed.	1 mark Application of sociological research methods is minimal, tangential or largely irrelevant, with little clear connection to the issue in the question.
0	0 marks No creditworthy response.	0 marks No creditworthy response.

Q5 Explain two ways sociologists could investigate how social stratification can affect contemporary social inequalities.**You must use your knowledge of sociological research methods to support your answer. [10]**

AO1 (4 marks): Students should show knowledge and understanding of relevant sociological research methods dealing with the issue of how social stratification can affect contemporary social inequalities.

AO2 (6 marks): Students should be using knowledge and understanding to explicitly address the issue of how social stratification can affect contemporary social inequalities.

Chosen methods should demonstrate an appropriate choice of research method when investigating how social stratification can affect contemporary social inequalities.

Marks should be awarded in line with the qualitative descriptors in the marking criteria to reflect the depth of knowledge and understanding. Assessment Objectives should be marked at each level independently. For example, it is possible that a student can attain a Level 4 response for AO1 knowledge and understanding, but only a Level 2 response for AO2 application.

Candidates who only provide one reason (and therefore don't fully respond to the demands of the question) are limited to Level 2 (for both AO1 and AO2).

NB: Marks for AO2 can only be awarded for application of knowledge and understanding to the issue in the question.

Relevant points students might use in their answer include:

- Official statistics
- Questionnaires
- Semi-structured interviews
- Mixed methods
- Generalisability
- Reliability
- Quantitative
- Positivism
- Qualitative
- Longitudinal studies
- Life chances
- '7Up - 63Up' Series
- Next Steps
- Understanding Society.

Exemplar response

- Sociologists could investigate how social stratification can affect contemporary social inequalities by using longitudinal studies. These are studies that observe the same subjects over an extended period. (AO1) Researchers could use such studies to measure patterns and trends and the same individuals to monitor how social stratification, such as class, may affect their social mobility and life chances. This can include areas such as education and health. One example is the Up Series which follows the lives of fourteen children since 1964. The study examines to what extent social class background determined the future life-chances of the children. (AO2)
- Any other reasonable response.

Q6# How far has patriarchy caused inequality between women and men? You must use your knowledge and understanding from across the full course of study when answering this question. [20]			
Level	AO1 Knowledge and Understanding (AO1 x 4)	AO2 Application (AO2 x 6)	AO3 Analysis and Evaluation (AO3 x 10)
4	4 marks Responses demonstrate clear, accurate and detailed knowledge of sociological material and/or research methods drawn from across the full course of study . A range of points from both sides of the view are developed, with each explained fully and consistently.	5–6 marks Sociological material and/or research methods drawn from across the full course of study , is applied directly, precisely and consistently to the demands of the question, addressing all points effectively.	8–10 marks A range of points drawn from across the full course of study from both sides are analysed and evaluated in full. Sociological material and/or research methods is used to construct a coherent and sustained argument, weighing strengths and weaknesses, comparing perspectives and/or evidence in making sound judgements and leading to a clear, logical and well-supported conclusion. <i>There is a well-developed and sustained line of reasoning which is clear, coherent and logically structured. Information presented is relevant/appropriate and substantiated/supported by evidence.</i>
3	3 marks Responses demonstrate generally accurate and relevant knowledge of sociological material and/or research methods, with some detail. A range of points from both sides of view are covered, though development may be uneven, with some points explained more effectively than others.	3–4 marks Sociological material and/or research methods is applied appropriately to the question, with clear relevance to the points made, though precision and consistency will be less secure than at Level 4.	5–7 marks A range of points from both sides are analysed and evaluated. Sociological material and/or research methods are used to develop a reasoned argument, considering strengths and weaknesses and making some comparison of perspectives and/or evidence in making a reasonable judgement, leading to a partially developed conclusion. Arguments made at this level will lack the development of level 4 responses or provide an uneven treatment of the points raised. <i>There is a line of reasoning presented which is reasonably coherent with some structure. Information presented is mostly relevant/appropriate and mostly substantiated/supported by evidence.</i>
2	2 marks Responses show limited knowledge of sociological material and/or research methods, which may include inaccuracies and little detail. More than one point is included, though these are underdeveloped and unevenly explained.	2 marks There is an attempt to apply sociological material and/or research methods, but application is weak, inconsistent or only partially relevant across more than one point. Precision and consistency will be limited at this level.	3–4 marks Points are limited in analysis and evaluation. Sociological material and/or research methods are used to construct arguments is sometimes relevant but may be descriptive and/or superficial. Judgements may rely on assertion and may not compare both sides of arguments. Conclusions, if present, are unclear, unsupported or illogical. Arguments at this level will lack the more consistent analysis and depth of level 3 responses. <i>The response has limited structure. Information presented is sometimes relevant/appropriate and sometimes substantiated/supported by evidence.</i>
1	1 mark Responses demonstrate basic knowledge of sociological material and/or research methods, which is often unclear or inaccurate. One or more points may be identified but are weakly or minimally addressed.	1 mark Application of sociological material and/or research methods is minimal, tangential or largely irrelevant, with little clear connection to the question.	1–2 marks Points demonstrate limited or no effective evaluation of sociological material and/or research methods. If present, evidence will be anecdotal and/or common sense and lack relevance. Comments are typically assertive or unsupported, with little or no analysis. Conclusions, if present, are brief, unclear and unsupported. Arguments at this level will lack appropriate structure and evidence of level 2 responses. <i>The response is poorly structured. Information presented is rarely relevant/appropriate and unlikely to be substantiated/ supported by evidence.</i>
0	0 marks No creditworthy response.	0 marks No creditworthy response.	0 marks No creditworthy response.

Q6# How far has patriarchy caused inequality between women and men? You must use your knowledge and understanding from across the full course of study when answering this question. [20]

AO1 (4 marks): Students should show knowledge and understanding of relevant sociological research methods investigating patriarchy as a cause of inequality between women and men.

AO2 (6 marks): Students should be using knowledge and understanding to explicitly address the issue of the patriarchy as a cause of inequality between women and men.

AO3 (10 marks): Students should analyse and evaluate the selected theories, concepts and evidence to present arguments, make judgements and draw conclusions to address the issue of the patriarchy as a cause of inequality between women and men.

Assessment Objectives should be marked at each level independently. For example, it is possible that a student can attain a Level 4 response for AO1 knowledge and understanding, but only a Level 2 response for AO2 application.

No set amount of points are required, though as a guide, to reflect the range of their knowledge, a student would typically provide at least four discussion points.

A student would be expected to focus most of their answer on AO3 because it carries the highest marks. This means that after showing they understand the relevant material (AO1) and applying it correctly to the issue in the question (AO2), they must demonstrate analysis and evaluation.

Student responses must move beyond describing ideas and show critical thinking throughout, because this is where the 10 AO3 marks are awarded.

Total marks for AO3 are broken down as follows:

- present arguments = 4 marks
- make judgements = 4 marks
- draw conclusions = 2 marks.

Examiners will use a best fit approach when deciding which level a student response falls into based on the level descriptors, but to be awarded in the top levels, all three elements must be present.

All points can be supported with any appropriate knowledge and understanding that a student may have learned whilst studying the course.

Relevant Knowledge, understanding and evidence students might use in their answer includes:

- Feeley: parental authority is patriarchal
- Non-participant observations
- Unstructured interviews
- Secondary data
- Positivism
- Interpretivism
- Verstehen
- Bias
- Subjectivity
- Objectivity
- Delphy and Leonard, Ansley, Komarovsky, Oakley, Sue Sharpe, feminists.

Exemplar response

- Oakley argues that traditional 'masculine' interview techniques based on detachment and objectivity are inappropriate for feminist research. In her study of housework as work, she used a mixed-class sample and conducted in-depth, semi-structured qualitative interviews to build rapport and trust. She claimed this approach allowed women to speak openly, creating verstehen and more valid data. Oakley also incorporated quantitative measures, such as satisfaction levels, to add scientific credibility to her argument. (AO1) Oakley's research found that women performed most of the housework and childcare, reproducing patriarchy and revealing inequalities between men and women. This view is supported by feminist Feely, who argues that the family socialises children into accepting traditional instrumental and expressive gender roles in the home that reinforce patriarchal inequalities. (AO2) However, critics such as Barker argue that Oakley's feminist commitment and subjective interviewing style reduced objectivity and reliability. Additionally, as her research was conducted in the 1970s, changing gender roles may limit its contemporary relevance. Qualitative methods are also criticised for small, non-representative samples, reducing generalisability and making it difficult to prove that patriarchy is the main cause of inequality. (AO3)
- Sharpe's study '*Just Like a Girl*' used semi-structured interviews and questionnaires to investigate girls' aspirations. It was a longitudinal study, comparing the attitudes of working-class girls in London schools in the 1970s and the 1990s. (AO1) Sharpe found that girls in the 1970s prioritised marriage and family, whereas girls in the 1990s were more focused on careers, independence, and equality with men. This change suggests that patriarchy had previously limited girls' ambitions, but as gender roles have become less restrictive, girls' ambitions changed. This is supported by educational trends such as girls consistently achieving more grade 4/C or above at GCSE, contributing to the so-called "genderquake" in education. (AO2) A strength of the study is that it clearly shows how girls' ambitions have changed over time, providing insight into social change. However, a limitation is that the study focused only on working-class girls in London, meaning the findings may not be generalisable to girls from different social classes, ethnic backgrounds, or regions. (AO3)

- McRobbie and Garber used qualitative research methods, including interviews, participant observation, and ethnography, to study gender socialisation. Their work provided insights into the lived experiences of girls. (AO1) For example, their study 'Bedroom Culture' showed that girls were subject to stricter social controls than boys through the process of gender socialisation. As a result, girls often experienced inequalities shaped by patriarchal controls, which limited their visible participation in areas such as subcultures, and impacted their behaviour in schools. This supports the view that patriarchal ideology is a key cause of gender inequality. (AO2) A strength of McRobbie and Garber's research is that it focused on girls' experiences in areas where they had previously been overlooked. The use of qualitative methods allowed for in-depth meanings and insights that would not have been captured by quantitative approaches. However, McRobbie later argued that the media promotes a 'post-feminist' illusion, suggesting that equality has been achieved while continuing to mask ongoing patriarchal inequalities. (AO3)
- Marxist feminist Benston examined the relationship between capitalism and gender inequality. She focused on how women's unpaid domestic labour supports the capitalist system. Benston argued that housework, childcare, and domestic responsibilities support the functioning of the economy, yet they are not recognised or paid. (AO1) She claimed that women support male workers ensuring they can go out and work, and socialise and care for children, thereby producing the next generation of workers. This free labour benefits capitalism by reducing costs for employers and the state. At the same time, it reinforces patriarchal ideology, keeping women economically dependent on men and sustaining gender inequality. (AO2) Some critics argue that this perspective is outdated and deterministic. Hakim, in her Preference Theory, suggests that women are not passive victims of patriarchy or capitalism but can make rational choices about their lives. She argues that women may choose to prioritise family life or combine part-time work with domestic responsibilities. This challenges the idea that patriarchy is always the main cause of gender inequality. (AO3)
- In conclusion, although there has been progress in reducing gender inequalities, evidence suggests that patriarchy persists in society. While measures such as the Equality Act have helped to address some inequalities, the continued existence of the gender pay gap suggests that patriarchy still underlies inequalities between men and women.
- Any other reasonable response.

Assessment Objectives Grid

	Question	AO1	AO2	AO3	Total mark for question
Section A (40)	1	5	-	-	5
	2	5	-	-	5
	3	4	6	-	10
	4	4	6	10	20
Section B (30)	5	4	6	-	10
	6	4	6	10	20

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