



GCE A LEVEL MARKING SCHEME

SUMMER 2025

**A LEVEL
SOCIOLOGY – UNIT 4
1200U40-1**

About this marking scheme

The purpose of this marking scheme is to provide teachers, learners, and other interested parties, with an understanding of the assessment criteria used to assess this specific assessment.

This marking scheme reflects the criteria by which this assessment was marked in a live series and was finalised following detailed discussion at an examiners' conference. A team of qualified examiners were trained specifically in the application of this marking scheme. The aim of the conference was to ensure that the marking scheme was interpreted and applied in the same way by all examiners. It may not be possible, or appropriate, to capture every variation that a candidate may present in their responses within this marking scheme. However, during the training conference, examiners were guided in using their professional judgement to credit alternative valid responses as instructed by the document, and through reviewing exemplar responses.

Without the benefit of participation in the examiners' conference, teachers, learners and other users, may have different views on certain matters of detail or interpretation. Therefore, it is strongly recommended that this marking scheme is used alongside other guidance, such as published exemplar materials or Guidance for Teaching. This marking scheme is final and will not be changed, unless in the event that a clear error is identified, as it reflects the criteria used to assess candidate responses during the live series.

GCE A LEVEL SOCIOLOGY - UNIT 4
SOCIAL INEQUALITY AND APPLIED METHODS OF SOCIOLOGICAL ENQUIRY
SUMMER 2025 MARK SCHEME

Notes for examiners

The mark scheme for each question is in two parts. Part 1 is advice on the specific question outlining indicative content which can be used to assess the quality of the candidate's response. The content is not prescriptive nor are candidates expected to cover all the material mentioned.

Part 2 is an assessment grid advising bands and associated marks that should be allocated to responses which demonstrate the qualities need in AO1, AO2 and, where appropriate, AO3. Where a response is not creditworthy or not attempted it is indicated on the grid as NRSP (No relevant sociological point).

Reference to examples and evidence drawn from the study of Welsh culture and society will be credited.

1. Read the following item and answer **all** the questions.

School Exclusions

Government statistics reveal that between 2007 and 2018 a disproportionately high number of Black Caribbean pupils were excluded from school.

Demie was interested to investigate why this was the case. He and his team of researchers used semi structured interviews and focus groups to collect evidence on the reasons behind the over representation of Black Caribbean pupils in school exclusions.

Schools with an above national average number of Black Caribbean students and evidence of exclusion in the schools were used. Each school selected focus groups made up of 15 teaching staff, 17 school governors, 14 Black Caribbean parents and 8 SENCOs [special educational needs co-ordinators].

The researchers concluded that a range of factors had resulted in the school exclusions.

Demie, F. (2022). *Understanding the causes and consequences of school exclusions: Teachers, parents and schools' perspectives*. Routledge.

- (a) Identify and explain two reasons why the researchers decided to use semi structured interviews in their research. [10]

There should be two reasons for AO1 band 3. These reasons can be theoretical, practical or methodological and must contain technical language. For AO2 band 3 the reasons must be contextualised and explained with reference to methodological issues.

Indicative content

The answer should be contextualised.

- It gives an insight into reasons and this was the aim of the research.
- It gives an insight into different views because they asked different stakeholders.
- Validity-allows respondents to have a voice.
- They also allow for some degree of standardisation so that some comparisons might be made between interviewees.
- Any other relevant point.

Band	AO1 elements 1a & 1b	AO2 element 1a
3	4 marks Answers demonstrate detailed knowledge and understanding of sociological theories/concepts/evidence relating to the context of the debate/question.	5-6 marks Answers demonstrate a detailed ability to select, apply and interpret appropriate sociological theories/concepts/evidence in the context of the debate/question.
2	2-3 marks Answers demonstrate some knowledge and understanding of sociological theories/concepts/ evidence relating to the context of the debate/question	3-4 marks Answers demonstrate some ability to select, apply and interpret appropriate sociological theories/ concepts/evidence in the context of the debate/question.
1	1 mark Answers demonstrate basic knowledge and understanding of sociological theories/concepts/evidence relating to the context of the debate/question.	1-2 marks Answers demonstrate a basic ability to select, apply and interpret appropriate sociological theories/concepts/evidence in the context of the debate/question.
	0 marks No relevant sociological point.	0 marks No relevant sociological point.

- (b) As an A level student, you have been asked to design a research project using one research method, to collect data on the career aspirations of a sample of young people in your area.
- (i) Describe each stage of your research design, justifying the reasons for your choice at each stage.
- (ii) Discuss problems that may occur and the impact of these problems on the quality of the data collected. [30]

Answers should demonstrate the ability to make sense of sociological debates, offer sociological examples and explain sociological concepts. Answers need to use key terminology. Credit will be given to effective discussion where there is evidence of detailed and wide-ranging knowledge. Where answers demonstrate all abilities to the highest standard, then they will be consistent with Band 4. However, answers demonstrating knowledge, but fewer skills of interpretation and discussion may achieve Band 4 for AO1 but lower bands for AO2 and AO3.

The research design should be ethical, achievable and appropriate to the theme of the proposed study. Candidates should make their choices, justify their research approach and design in the context of the brief. They should pay close attention to the reasons for their choices as they have no hints in the brief such as representative sample or qualitative/quantitative data. Potential problems must also be identified.

Candidates who use more than one method cannot get into top band

Indicative content

Expect to see the following stages addressed in the proposed design:

- Operationalisation of key terms.
- Sampling:
 - population
 - sampling technique
 - access
- Research method.
- Ethical issues.
- Practical considerations.

Expect to see the research design justified and potential problems identified in relation to key methodological concepts and other relevant issues such as:

- Ethics.
- Validity.
- Reliability.
- Practical considerations.
- Generalisability.
- Representativeness.
- Operationalisation.

Band	AO1 element 1a & 1b	AO2 element 1a	AO3 strands 1-3
4	9-10 marks Answers demonstrate detailed knowledge and understanding of sociological theories/ concepts/ evidence relating to the context of the debate/question.	9 -10 marks Answers demonstrate accurate and relevant selection of appropriate sociological theories/ concepts/ evidence. These are applied and interpreted in the context of the debate/question.	9-10 marks Answers demonstrate detailed, well organised and logical arguments. Logical judgements and conclusions will be offered based on explicit evaluation of the relevant theories/ concepts/ evidence examined.
3	6-8 marks Answers demonstrate some knowledge and understanding of sociological theories/ concepts/ evidence relating to the context of the debate/question.	6-8 marks Answers demonstrate some accurate and relevant selection of appropriate sociological theories/ concepts/ evidence. Some of which are applied and interpreted in the context of the debate/question.	6-8 marks Answers demonstrate some, well organised and logical arguments. Judgements and conclusions offered will show some evaluation of the relevant theories/ concepts/ evidence examined.
2	3-5 marks Answers demonstrate basic knowledge and understanding of sociological theories/ concepts/ evidence relating to the context of the debate/question.	3-5 marks Answers demonstrate a basic ability to select, apply and interpret appropriate sociological theories/ concepts/ evidence in the context of the debate/question.	3-5 marks Answers demonstrate basic arguments. Judgements and conclusions offered will show basic evaluation of the theories/ concepts/ evidence examined.
1	1-2 marks Answers demonstrate limited knowledge and understanding of sociological theories/ concepts/ evidence relating to the context of the debate/question.	1-2 marks Answers demonstrate limited ability to select and/or interpret and/ or apply sociological theories/ concepts/ evidence in the context of the debate/question.	1- 2 marks Answers demonstrate limited argument. Any judgements and conclusions offered will show limited evaluation of any theories/ concepts/ evidence examined.
	0 marks No relevant sociological point.	0 marks No relevant sociological point.	0 marks No relevant sociological point.

Social Inequality

2. (a) There is evidence of social inequality in contemporary UK society. With reference to two areas of life use sociological evidence to support this. [20]

Answers should identify two areas. For both areas answers should use appropriate evidence; official statistics and sociological research. The AO2 marks are for selection and explanation of appropriate evidence. For band 4 AO1 there should be more than one piece of evidence cited for each area identified.

Evidence will link to two areas and can cite the same dimension of inequality in each or different dimensions.

Indicative content :

NB the answer could look at one dimension such as gender/ class/ or ethnicity, or two dimensions but in either case evidence from two areas must be presented.

Education

- Differential attainment, Youth Cohort Study, Department for Education and Skills (DfES) statistics showing differences linked to social class; the focus here should demonstrate inequality not just difference.
- Material factors that might create unequal opportunities and outcomes such as:
 - Forsyth and Furlong.
 - Callendar and Jackson.
 - Gilchrist Phillips and Ross.
 - Ball.
 - Sullivan.
 - Reay.

Crime

- Patterns of offending, official police statistics, Crime Survey England and Wales and prison population linked to social class. Again, the focus should be on inequality not on difference:
 - Glueck and Glueck.
 - Walmsley.
 - Maguire.
 - Hughes and Langan.
 - Croall.

Health

- Health inequalities and social class, patterns of morbidity and mortality, Black Report, Acheson Report:
 - CIPR research.
 - General Household Survey.
 - Shaw et al.
 - Wilkinson.

Other areas could also be used such as work, the family, media.

Band	AO1 elements 1a & 1b	AO2 element 1a
4	9-10 marks Answers demonstrate detailed knowledge and understanding of sociological theories/ concepts/ evidence relating to the context of the debate/question.	9-10marks Answers demonstrate a detailed ability to select, apply and interpret appropriate sociological theories/ concepts/ evidence in the context of the debate/question.
3	6-8 marks Answers demonstrate some knowledge and understanding of sociological theories/ concepts/ evidence relating to the context of the debate/question.	6-8 marks Answers demonstrate some ability to select, apply and interpret appropriate sociological theories/ concepts/ evidence in the context of the debate/question.
2	3-5 marks Answers demonstrate basic knowledge and understanding of sociological theories/ concepts/evidence relating to the context of the debate/question.	3- 5 marks Answers demonstrate a basic ability to select, apply and interpret appropriate sociological theories/ concepts/ evidence in the context of the debate/question.
1	1-2 marks Answers demonstrate limited knowledge and understanding of sociological theories/ concepts/ evidence relating to the context of the debate/question.	1 - 2 marks Answers demonstrate limited ability to select and/or interpret and/ or apply sociological theories/ concepts/ evidence in the context of the debate/question.
	0 marks No relevant sociological point.	0 marks No relevant sociological point.

2. (b) Evaluate the view that social class is the most important source of social inequality in contemporary society. [40]

Answers will make judgements of sociological concepts, theory, controversy or sociological debate. The answer will focus on the debate in the question. Credit will be given to the effective use of supporting sociological evidence/theories and concepts. Where answers demonstrate all abilities to the highest standard then they will be consistent with Band 4. However, answers demonstrating knowledge, but fewer skills of assessment, judgement and evaluation may achieve Band 4 for AO1 but lower bands for AO2 and AO3.

Indicative content

For the view:

- Marxist ideas.
- The distribution of wealth and income and the growing gap between rich and poor.
- Reference may be made to recent political, social or public debate; employment such as zero hours contracts, temporary/ fixed term contracts and their impact.
- Ideas should be compared and evaluated with reference to supporting evidence.
- There should be a sound and accurate understanding of Marxist theory and its focus on class inequalities in explaining social inequality.

Supporting but also developing and criticising the view:

- Weberian ideas about class and its significance; market situation, four classes; privileged, petty bourgeoisie, white collar workers, manual workers.
- Weber's ideas about status; different dimensions of inequality such as gender, age, ethnicity and discussion of how useful this is to our understanding of social inequality...used to assess Marxist ideas.

Against:

- Functionalist ideas and the notion of meritocracy.
- Expect reference to functionalists such as; Parsons, Durkheim, Davis and Moore. With Tumin's critique of these ideas.
- Expect reference to ideas such as the notion of effective role allocation and meritocracy; the inevitability and functionality of stratification and social inequality.
- New Right ideas as a defence of functionalism; Saunders.
- The significance of gender and ethnicity as a source of inequality- feminist ideas and reference to racism with supporting evidence to argue [not all feminist ideas will be examined].
- Radical feminist ideas outlined and evaluated with reference to evidence and examples; Firestone, Millet
- Liberal feminist ideas outlined and evaluated with reference to evidence and examples; Oakley.
- Marxist feminist ideas outlined and evaluated with reference to evidence and examples.
- Black feminist ideas outlined and evaluated with reference to evidence and examples.
- Any other relevant point.

Band	AO1 element 1a & 1b	AO2 element 1a	AO3 strands 1-3
4	9-11 marks Answers demonstrate detailed knowledge and understanding of sociological theories/ concepts/ evidence relating to the context of the debate/question.	9-11 marks Answers demonstrate accurate and relevant selection of appropriate sociological theories/ concepts/ evidence. These are applied and interpreted in the context of the debate/question.	15-18 marks Answers demonstrate detailed, well organised and logical arguments. Logical judgements and conclusions will be offered based on explicit evaluation of the relevant theories/ concepts/ evidence examined.
3	6-8 marks Answers demonstrate some knowledge and understanding of sociological theories/ concepts/ evidence relating to the context of the debate/question.	6-8 marks Answers demonstrate some accurate and relevant selection of appropriate sociological theories/ concepts/ evidence. Some of which are applied and interpreted in the context of the debate/question.	10-14 marks Answers demonstrate some, well organised and logical arguments. Judgements and conclusions offered will show some evaluation of the relevant theories/ concepts/ evidence examined.
2	3-5 marks Answers demonstrate basic knowledge and understanding of sociological theories/ concepts/ evidence relating to the context of the debate/question.	3-5 marks Answers demonstrate a basic ability to select, apply and interpret appropriate sociological theories/ concepts/ evidence in the context of the debate/question.	5-9 marks Answers demonstrate basic arguments. Judgements and conclusions offered will show basic evaluation of the theories/ concepts/ evidence examined.
1	1-2 marks Answers demonstrate limited knowledge and understanding of sociological theories/ concepts/ evidence relating to the context of the debate/question.	1-2 marks Answers demonstrate limited ability to select and/or interpret and/ or apply sociological theories/ concepts/ evidence in the context of the debate/question.	1-4 marks Answers demonstrate limited argument. Any judgements and conclusions offered will show limited evaluation of any theories/ concepts/ evidence examined.
	0 marks No relevant sociological point.	0 marks No relevant sociological point.	0 marks No relevant sociological point.

3. (a) There is evidence of gender inequality in contemporary UK society. With reference to two areas of life use sociological evidence to support this. [20]

Answers should identify two areas. For both areas answers should use appropriate evidence; official statistics and sociological research. The AO2 marks are for selection and explanation of appropriate evidence. For band 4 AO1 there should be more than one piece of evidence cited for each area identified.

Indicative content:

Family inequalities relating to gender such as:

- Division of labour; Duncombe and Marsden, Leonard, Edgell, British Social Attitudes Survey,
- Ferri & Smith childcare,
- Domestic violence; Stanko,
- Power; Pahl, Vogler.

Work and pay

- Pay evidence on gender pay gaps from Equalities and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) or Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC), Chartered Management Institute, Women and Work Commission, Social Trends, Office of National Statistics (ONS).
- Vertical segregation, with evidence from EOC, ONS, Dept for Works and Pensions, Labour Force Survey.
- Horizontal segregation, evidence from EOC, DWP, Equality and Human Rights Commission Reports [various].

Health

- Lyng and notions of risk behaviour,
- Millar and Glendenning; higher rates of poverty among women=poorer health, Popay and Bartley; domestic labour affects the health of women,
- Male health- less likely to access health services-ONS.

Crime and deviance

- Prison population and conviction rates ONS, Chivalry thesis; Graham and Bowling, Allen.

Other areas could also be used if relevant.

Band	AO1 elements 1a & 1b	AO2 element 1a
4	9-10 marks Answers demonstrate detailed knowledge and understanding of sociological theories/ concepts/ evidence relating to the context of the debate/question.	9-10marks Answers demonstrate a detailed ability to select, apply and interpret appropriate sociological theories/ concepts/ evidence in the context of the debate/question.
3	6-8 marks Answers demonstrate some knowledge and understanding of sociological theories/ concepts/ evidence relating to the context of the debate/question.	6-8 marks Answers demonstrate some ability to select, apply and interpret appropriate sociological theories/ concepts/ evidence in the context of the debate/question.
2	3-5 marks Answers demonstrate basic knowledge and understanding of sociological theories/ concepts/evidence relating to the context of the debate/question.	3-5 marks Answers demonstrate a basic ability to select, apply and interpret appropriate sociological theories/ concepts/ evidence in the context of the debate/question.
1	1-2 marks Answers demonstrate limited knowledge and understanding of sociological theories/ concepts/ evidence relating to the context of the debate/question.	1-2 marks Answers demonstrate limited ability to select and/or interpret and/ or apply sociological theories/ concepts/ evidence in the context of the debate/question.
	0 marks No relevant sociological point.	0 marks No relevant sociological point.

3. (b) 'Social inequalities are functional and inevitable'. Evaluate this view. [40]

Answers will make judgements of sociological concepts, theory, controversy or sociological debate. The answer will focus on the debate in the question. Credit will be given to the effective use of supporting sociological evidence/theories and concepts. Where answers demonstrate all abilities to the highest standard then they will be consistent with Band 4. However, answers demonstrating knowledge, but fewer skills of assessment, judgement and evaluation may achieve Band 4 for AO1 but lower bands for AO2 and AO3.

Indicative content

NB: There should be some attempt to make a judgement on the view based on the ideas presented.

For the view:

- Functionalist ideas and the notion of meritocracy.
- Expect reference to functionalists such as; Parsons, Durkheim, Davis and Moore.
- Expect reference to ideas such as the notion of effective role allocation and meritocracy; the inevitability and functionality of stratification and social inequality.
- New Right ideas as a defence of functionalism; Saunders.

Against the view: [ideas should be linked to the notion of the inevitability and functionality of inequality]

- Criticisms of functionalist ideas such as Tumin who isn't necessarily Marxist; he disagreed with the assumption that the relative importance of a particular job can always be measured by how much money or prestige is given to the people who performed those jobs. That assumption made identifying important jobs difficult.
- Marxist ideas provide important criticisms of the view but could also be used to argue the question of functionality for whom.....but don't expect this.
- The distribution of wealth and income and the growing gap between rich and poor.
- Reference may be made to recent political, social or public debate; employment such as zero hours contracts, temporary/ fixed term contracts and their impact.
- The differential impact of the pandemic on different groups.
- The increase in the use of food banks, inflation and the increase in the cost of living.
- Weberian ideas about class and its significance; market situation four classes; privileged, petty bourgeoisie, white collar workers, manual workers.
- Weber's ideas about status; different dimensions of inequality such as gender, age, ethnicity and discussion of how useful this is to our understanding of social inequality...
- Any other relevant point.

Band	AO1 element 1a & 1b	AO2 element 1a	AO3 strands 1-3
4	9-11 marks Answers demonstrate detailed knowledge and understanding of sociological theories/ concepts/ evidence relating to the context of the debate/question.	9-11 marks Answers demonstrate accurate and relevant selection of appropriate sociological theories/ concepts/ evidence. These are applied and interpreted in the context of the debate/question.	15-18 marks Answers demonstrate detailed, well organised and logical arguments. Logical judgements and conclusions will be offered based on explicit evaluation of the relevant theories/ concepts/ evidence examined.
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2	3-5 marks Answers demonstrate basic knowledge and understanding of sociological theories/ concepts/ evidence relating to the context of the debate/question.	3-5 marks Answers demonstrate a basic ability to select, apply and interpret appropriate sociological theories/ concepts/ evidence in the context of the debate/question.	5-9 marks Answers demonstrate basic arguments. Judgements and conclusions offered will show basic evaluation of the theories/ concepts/ evidence examined.
1	1-2 marks Answers demonstrate limited knowledge and understanding of sociological theories/ concepts/ evidence relating to the context of the debate/question.	1-2 marks Answers demonstrate limited ability to select and/or interpret and/ or apply sociological theories/ concepts/ evidence in the context of the debate/question.	1-4 marks Answers demonstrate limited argument. Any judgements and conclusions offered will show limited evaluation of any theories/ concepts/ evidence examined.
	0 marks No relevant sociological point.	0 marks No relevant sociological point.	0 marks No relevant sociological point.