ASSESSMENT REPORT

BHS315116 SOCIOLOGY

WRITTEN EXAM

GENERAL COMMENTS

Three Criteria are assessed on the written exam: Criteria 1 and 2 focus on the sociological content of the answer and Criterion 7 requires a structured response to the question.

The elements of Criteria 1 and 2 assessed are 2, 4 and 5 and include the use of sociological terms, concepts, theories and perspectives and the application of these to a sociological issue as specified in the question. The evaluation of the various theories and perspectives by explaining strengths and weaknesses should be a part of the response. It is expected that the answer will include evidence to support the argument presented. This evidence should include a reference to the provided stimulus items but should not be restricted to this alone. It is disappointing that fewer students are referring to supporting evidence beyond the stimulus. It is important to note that at least two sociological theories explaining the issue are required to be used within the response in order to achieve a ‘C’ rating.

Elements 1 and 2 of Criterion 7 are assessed on the exam and focus upon the structuring of the argument in response to the question. All aspects of the question should be addressed including the requested use of at least one of the stimulus pieces provided. The provided stimulus is a feature of the Sociology examination and the use of the material within the constructed answer is essential to achieve a ‘C’ rating.

SECTION A

QUESTION 1 – SOCIALISATION AND IDENTITY (49 Responses)

Overall the responses to this question were not as strong as they might have been. All candidates discussed the role of socialisation in a person’s development (i.e. with regard to the agents and stages of socialisation) but did not necessarily address the question of how an individual’s identity is constructed and the views and theories concerning the development of the self.

Candidates are also reminded that a strong response must include an evaluation of the theories/perspectives: this means some discussion of their strengths and limitations—what they explain well and what they don’t explain. This may also include some comparison between theories/perspectives.

Stronger responses explained the process of socialisation, including agents and stages, and applied an interactionist view to the development of self/construction of identity. This often included an overview of the theories of Cooley, Mead, and/or Goffman. Generally, these theories were accurately explained, in varying degrees of detail. Some candidates also applied functionalist and conflict perspectives to the question, with strong responses successfully explaining how these perspectives explain identity construction and weaker responses merely outlining these perspectives, without explaining how they apply to the development of self.
Weaker responses focused on the roles of agents such as family, peers, media and work in the process of socialisation, but did not link them to identity construction — rather they were discussed more in the context of their roles as social institutions.

In general, candidates successfully referred to at least one stimulus, with stronger responses incorporating a number of the stimuli into their essays. More specifically, candidates referred primarily to Stimulus 1 in their responses, with many focusing on the influence of the peer group in socialisation but not necessarily relating to identity construction.

Alternatively, there were stronger responses that used this stimulus to link to labelling with Cooley’s looking-glass self; or who incorporated other stimuli into their responses.

Stronger responses integrated a variety of sociological terms and concepts into their essays. Stronger responses included conclusions, rather than only explaining the material and then ending their response.

**QUESTION 2 – SOCIALISATION AND SOCIAL CONTROL (18 Responses)**

Only a small number of students responded to the question on the links between socialisation and social control. Several very good answers addressed the full question including the mechanisms of social control and took advantage of the provided stimulus to elaborate on informal and formal social control as carried out through the agencies of socialisation in society. It was pleasing to see students going beyond socialisation and social control from the perspective of functionalist and conflict theories and incorporate a detailed analysis of control theory. The examination of what makes us conform rather than deviate from society’s norms was elaborated upon.

Disappointingly, several candidates either numbered their paper incorrectly or misread the question and did not provide a full answer regarding the mechanisms of social control. Candidates are reminded to read the paper carefully and to select the appropriate question to answer to best show their knowledge of aspects of socialisation and deviance.

**QUESTION 3 – THEORIES OF DEVIANCE (276 Responses)**

This question is the most popular on the paper with close to three quarters of the candidates answering it. As it is a predictable question, candidates should be well prepared to provide a sociological response that addresses the topic to some degree. Most candidates demonstrated a reasonable level of knowledge and understanding of the sociological theories of deviance and provided some information relating to the elements of the theories. Most candidates also managed to find some evidence from the stimulus to include in their essay. Many candidates correctly linked the theories to the relevant perspectives.

Stronger responses provided a detailed explanation and evaluation of alternative sociological theories in response to the question. Candidates who incorporated a range of sociological terms and concepts to explain youth involvement in criminal behaviour in contemporary Australian society (CAS) fared well. Better responses discussed the strengths and limitations of the theories provided and used the stimulus material and other information from the course to write a coherent argument. Weaker responses made limited use of the stimulus material and provided little evaluation of theories. Candidates are encouraged to clearly outline the key features of the theories and show how they relate to the specific issues of deviance in the stimulus material.
Criterion 1:
Stronger responses:

- Included a wide range of relevant terms and concepts, which were well-integrated throughout their discussion.
- Tended to incorporate examples from more than one of the stimulus materials to demonstrate their understanding of each of the theories discussed.
- Explained three, or sometimes four, theories of deviance in depth and detail. The strongest and most effective essays, however, tended to include three theories that were discussed, analysed and evaluated in-depth and detail.
  - They also unpacked and explained the key elements of each of the theories they discussed and related them to specific examples of deviance (or conformity) from the stimulus materials.
    - For example, in relation to Merton’s Structural Strain theory, some candidates related the elements in his typology of conformity and deviance to examples from the stimulus.
    - Some also drew on examples from their course work and texts to further support their discussion and analysis.
- Some were able to elaborate effectively on the connection between the theory and the sociological perspective, linking their analysis to examples from the stimulus materials.
  - For example, Durkheim’s functionalist theory of anomie was linked to Control theory and the positive and negative functions of deviance. This link then enabled further opportunities for discussing the strengths and limitations of the theory in explaining youth crime in CAS.
- Some very strong responses used evidence from the stimulus materials to link to their evaluation of the limitations of the theories in explaining youth deviance in contemporary Australian society.
- Developed a strong and convincing analysis of Durkheim’s positive and negative functions of deviance in relation to the evidence in the stimulus materials. This was often successfully linked to Control and/or Structural Strain theories.

Weaker responses:

- Tended to provide information about deviance rather than addressing the topic through examples from the stimulus. A considerable number of papers provided a wide range of information about deviance theories, sometimes writing four, five or more pages, but barely mentioning, or even alluding to evidence in the stimulus materials. This undermined their capacity to demonstrate a depth of understanding through analysis and evaluation.
- Included some relevant terms and concepts, which were linked to their response to the question. However, some of the weaker responses failed to include many relevant sociological terms that related to the deviance question.
- Failed to mention the elements of the deviance theories at all (e.g. CTT – age, intensity, ratio). Others mentioned some elements of theories but failed to explain them or link to explaining deviance.
- Some failed to explain the theories or address the topic.
- Some included only one theory. Very weak responses failed to mention any theories and resorted to a generalised discussion about deviance and crime. Some responses relied on reiterating the information in the stimulus materials.
Criterion 7:
Stronger responses:
• Effectively and consistently integrated examples from the stimulus throughout their discussion. Some students used one or two stimulus pieces, others referred to the range of stimuli provided in Section A. Many related their discussion of the limitations of the theories to specific examples from the stimulus materials.
• Presented a well-structured essay: paragraphs were sequenced effectively and logically. Individual paragraphs were well structured, linking back to the aspect of the topic under discussion. Provided a conclusion that effectively summed up the discussion and addressed the topic.

Weaker responses:
• Tended to be poorly structured. Some lacked paragraphs.
• Some presented very brief responses.
• Others presented several pages of information but failed to address the topic of young people and criminal behaviour or provide evidence of their understanding of deviance theories.
• Made very little use of the stimulus materials provided.

QUESTION 4 – RELATIVITY OF DEVIANCE (65 Responses)

Question 4 asked candidates to do three things: define deviance, discuss the relativity of deviance and evaluate alternative theories as to why deviance occurs. There were some very good answers to this question and most answers provided a comprehensive survey of various theories of deviance. Explaining the various theories of deviance, however, generally overpowered the other parts of the question.

Most answers started with a definition of deviance. This was a logical and sensible approach but it elicited a very wide range of often very lose definitions of deviance. While answers showed most candidates had some idea of what deviance is, candidates are urged to learn a definition of the term from a Sociological textbook rather than trying to make up one on the run in the exam.

The big shortcoming in answers to this question centred on the relativity of deviance. This was really what the question was all about and Stimulus 4 provided a good example of how it operates. Candidates are reminded that the stimuli generally follow the questions. That is Stimulus 1 relates to Question 1, Stimulus 2 to Question 2 etc. That does not mean you can’t refer to different stimuli in answering any of the questions but the stimuli have been chosen to provide specific insights into a particular question. Unfortunately, many answers provided little, and in some cases, no discussion of the concept of the inherent relativity of deviance. When it was mentioned it was all too frequently just a sentence in the introduction.

Most general Sociology textbooks provide an explanation of the relativity of deviance. There is no clearer or more succinct explanation than that by Martin Haralambos and Michael Holborn in their Sociology: Themes and Perspectives (my quote is taken from the 6th ed., 2004: 332 but can be found in later editions). It is a masterly explanation of a complex idea and worth quoting at length:

Deviance is relative: there is no absolute way of defining a deviant act. Deviance can only be defined in relation to a particular standard and no standards are fixed or absolute. As such, what is regarded as deviant varies from time to time and place to place. In a particular society, an act that is considered deviant today may be defined as normal in the future. An act defined as deviant in one society may be seen as perfectly normal in another. Put another way, deviance is culturally determined and cultures change over time and vary from society to society.
Candidates seeking to answer this question may start by considering this definition or similar definitions in other works. It will make a coherent answer to a question on the relativity of deviance much easier to construct.

Candidates should then discuss the relevant stimulus, even if they choose to refer to other stimuli in their answer as well. Often candidates made their task harder by choosing to discuss stimuli intended for different questions than the one they were answering.

SECTION B

QUESTION 5 – INSTITUTIONS AND STRATIFICATION (170 Responses)

Responses to Question 5 were very strong overall. Candidates demonstrated a strong grasp of how stratification is maintained in Australian society and from a range of sociological perspectives. Most candidates were well prepared for this essay question; however, candidates must take care to directly answer the question using formal language. Weaker responses wasted time giving long-winded definitions of sociological terms/concepts detracting from their analysis.

Stronger responses were focused on the essay topic and made explicit connections to the stimulus and examples within Australian society. The majority of students chose to discuss education and family despite the stimulus for work being particularly rich in examples of stratification. Overall there were many strong responses to this essay question, particularly concerning education. Stronger responses were able to effectively evaluate the institution of family in contemporary Australian society in relation to the stimulus. Students should be careful to answer the question correctly by discussing stratification in relation to more than one institution in-depth. Stronger responses evaluated theories in relation to the stimulus rather than just explaining the theory.

Most responses addressed issues of stratification within the family and education. Weaker responses focussed too much on family type/structure without connection to issues of stratification.

The majority of candidates focused on socio-economic status as a connection between family and education. However, stronger answers explored issues relating to gender, location and Indigeneity. Students who were able to use evidence from beyond the stimulus and sociological theories, such as Gonski 2.0 (2018) and the Marriage Amendment Act 2017 within CAS were able to demonstrate a deeper understanding and a stronger viewpoint.

Some generalised responses concerning the nature of public/private school, race, Indigenous inequality as well as social class were made without supporting evidence in weaker responses. Only a few responses explored education and work which would have been a promising opportunity to explore gender issues related to stratification.

Some students have used an unusual essay structure where they have not discussed the sociological perspectives until the final paragraph resulting in their responses reading more like a personal opinion rather than a sociological evaluation.
QUESTION 6 - INSTITUTIONS AND CHANGE (132 Responses)

Nearly a third of candidates responded to this question and provided several excellent responses. More successful answers established early in their essay that change in one institution creates changes in another, and that whilst many social patterns are relatively stable many are undergoing significant transformation in Australian society. Effective introductions were decidedly absent from this question. Some less successful candidates wasted too much time referring in a very generalised manner to the emergence of an industrialised society in 18th century England, whilst arguably relevant for contextual understanding of the institution of work, factory conditions such as child labour and overcrowding is not as useful in explaining the social change that developed in Australian society.

Many more successful candidates used a discussion of the institutions of education and work well. In particular, some candidates were effective in discussing in a sophisticated way significant social trends such as credentialism and were able to identify why many students increasingly seek an education as a way to maximise their human capital. Successful candidates were also able to provide strong evidence for why this has not always been so in Australia. Establishing that a greater desire for tertiary education has created changes in the family institution such as delaying young people’s movement from the parental home, delayed marriage, delayed childbirth and many others.

Stronger candidates essentially used theories as the focus of their argument, rather than an obvious add-on. They applied their knowledge to the set question and linked this to the stimulus material. Using reference to the three sociological paradigms to consider social trends in one institution and then effectively moving into discussion of changes in the next chosen institution.

Many successful candidates who chose the institution of work provided evidence for significant change such as the movement from an economy based solely on primary industry. Evidence from the course was used well in support of a decline in the number of people employed in routine manual jobs and in industries that have high shares of routine manual occupations including construction, mining and manufacturing. One notable stronger essay referred to the stimulus material and linked males working part-time to technological change in the Australian institution of work describing many occupations as being now much more susceptible to automation.

Functionalist accounts of education as meritocratic led to opportunities for sound discussion of the private v public school debates. Where stronger students provided evidence for the reproductive relationship between the institution of education, students and their family aspirations. The role of the state in education was however largely ignored, despite recent debates for example about standardised national testing, and the trend to vocational education designed to fill gaps in the labour market. The few candidates, who did use the stimulus material well, really were exemplary in this instance.

The institution of family and change was far less popular this year, and some were weaker responses. Very brief and often lacking any theoretical explanations. Candidates who chose a combination of family and education often failed to use a balanced account of the two, tending to focus rather too much on education and often missing key concepts such as the impact of the introduction of the Family Law Act 1976. Most notably was the failure of many students to refer to the very powerful change created by a married woman entering the labour market and how this led to the great changes in the service industries, diversity of gender roles. Many weaker responses that used family failed also to mention legislation that created fundamental changes such as equal pay and unfair discrimination and dismissal laws.

Some exceptional candidates did, however, earn higher ratings when they identified and effectively linked key change to the stimulus material: Effectively explaining that over the last 25 years in particular hardly
any aspect of family life has not experienced a change in one way or another. Choosing to cover material such as increased rates of de facto relationships, changed patterns of gender roles for many families, of an increased fluidity in family form, single-parent households, the divorce rate still high but stable for some time, people living alone, same-sex marriage and recent legislation changes, rates of remarriage, an ageing population, declining birth and marriage rates.

Weaker candidates often were less successful because they failed to show adequate response to the set question and stimulus. Some weaker answers attempted to cover three institutions, namely family, work and education and, in one notable example, media as well. This presented problems for students who lacked the necessary preparation relating to course material and led to dumping superficial and illogical content. Very few candidates were well equipped to discuss the institution of media and the dramatic rate of change created by it, or the immense concentration of powerful media corporations in contemporary Australia.

**QUESTION 7 – INSTITUTIONS, POWER AND POLITICS (11 Responses)**

Only a small number of students chose this question and even fewer of that number actually answered the question on power and politics in society. Institutions referred to in the responses included all four of those required to be studied as part of the course with good answers provided regarding gender and the institutions of family and work, socio-economic status, family and educational outcomes and power within the media to influence discourse in society.

The course document provides guidance on the definition of power in society and this is a useful starting point for a response that focuses upon how power is gained and maintained and who benefits. Using the perspectives to evaluate power in society, and how these perspectives view it, is important to the response as is integrating examples from the course and the provided stimulus.

**QUESTION 8 – INTER-RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN INSTITUTIONS (95 Responses)**

The majority of responses answered the question regarding inter-relationships through an argument relating to socialisation and stratification. Whilst stronger candidates were able to outline this argument with references to the overlap, connections and interlocking of institutions, this aspect tended to be bypassed by weaker candidates. The impact was that many essays mentioned inter-relationships in the introduction and conclusion but not often during the body of the essay argument.

The majority of students demonstrated an understanding of the social institutions and Sociological approaches. Stronger students demonstrated a depth of understanding of sociological concepts and specific sociological theories. There were some strong discussions about how family and education interrelate, in particular around ascribed and achieved status, cultural capital and habitus.

Stronger responses had a clear, linear argument that made frequent references to the essay topic. Weaker responses were prepared/ rehearsed/ prescribed responses that followed the same structure, content and examples. This significantly weakened their essays overall, particularly against criterion 7.

Similarly to the above, the majority of candidates referred to Parson’s theory that low socio-economic status individual had “inferior brains and genes”. This was often misquoted, misused or poorly understood by the candidates, leading to stereotyping and somewhat offensive conclusions being drawn.
Stronger candidates were better able to elaborate on this idea and critique it thoroughly. Students are advised to be cautious in making generalisations around particular groups within society. For example, several students discussed Indigenous inequality, without evidence to support their statements.

The majority of candidates drew on the stimulus pieces effectively and thoroughly. The organisation of the essay structure around perspectives was not always an effective way to explore the essay topic and meant that it was often ignored by the candidate impacting on the criterion 7 outcomes. Spelling was an issue in relation to key concepts and theorists names.
INVESTIGATION PROJECT

Assessment of the Investigation Project

Three criteria are assessed externally on the Investigation Project. To provide clarity, the criteria and the examinable standard elements are specified here:

Criterion 5: Use ethical sociological research methods. Standard elements – 1, 2, 5 and 8
Criterion 6: Use evidence to support a sociological point of view. Standard elements 1, 2, 3 and 6
Criterion 7: Communicate sociological ideas, information, opinions, arguments and conclusions. Standard elements – 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5

Teachers and candidates are reminded that, to conform with the specifications within the Guidelines, folios must show evidence of the investigation of a sociological problem or issue that focuses on Module 3 of the course, Equality and Inequality in contemporary Australian society, and addresses ONE of the following three topics as described in the course document:

1. The causes and consequences of inequality; political, social and economic.
OR
2. Social differentiation and structured inequality as reproduced through socialisation.
OR
3. Structured inequality as it occurs through the institutions of family, school, work and/or media.

In addition, at least one of the following social categories; Gender, Indigenous People, Ethnicity, Age, Youth or Rural/regional Australians in contemporary Australian society should be the subject of the inequality as investigated in your research.

General comments

Candidates selected a pleasing range of topics for their investigative projects. Stronger pieces clearly outlined the area of study on their cover page and in the introduction, and provided clear links to the project guidelines and topics. These projects linked the primary research to existing secondary research and sociological theory in both the introduction and the discussion sections. The stronger projects also provided a clear method of investigation that accounted for ethical considerations and precise processes in gathering data. Results were presented and summarised and then discussed well in connection to secondary data. The stronger projects identified the limitations of the research and came to a coherent conclusion regarding the aims of the study. Overall, stronger projects demonstrated a sociological approach to investigating an issue of inequality in contemporary Australian society. It is recommended that students formulate a research question rather than an hypothesis for sociological research.

Weaker projects often lacked a clear direction in their investigation of inequality and needed to follow the guidelines closely. The cover page should provide precise details regarding the area of inequality under investigation and a well-defined aim/research question to explore. Weaker projects had limited reference to secondary research and sociological concepts and theories in their introduction and discussion sections and made limited links with the primary data gathered. Results need to be presented clearly, and summarised and referred to, in the analysis and discussion sections.

Candidates must remember to adhere to the word count and remember to include a count every 200 words. More time should be devoted to accurate referencing using the APA format and ensuring that at
least three different types of references are used. Overall, weaker projects needed to incorporate more of a sociological analysis of the issues of inequality in contemporary Australian society by developing a research project that examines and discusses sociological research, theories and concepts in relation to the primary research.

Topics, social categories and inequality

Some interesting and thoughtful topic choices were successfully investigated and presented. The majority of candidates chose appropriate topics; however, many were not adequately defined in terms of the social category and question chosen to investigate. The candidate should be able to clearly link their research question with their chosen topic and social category experiencing inequality. It should not be for the reader to figure out if and how what the candidate is investigating fits within the parameters of the Guidelines.

Further to this, it is essential that candidates do choose and adhere to one of the specified topic choices, and answer the question. For example, if a particular inequality exists for both genders, then it is not gender inequality unless a particular aspect of the issue can be identified. For example, both genders may experience homelessness but a growing number of older women are subject to this. So investigating why this particular gender and age demographic are vulnerable to homelessness is an appropriate topic because gender and age are sources of the inequality. Similarly, difference does not necessarily mean that there is inequality – the inequality must be established.

Stronger candidates:

- identified the topic from the three in the Guidelines
- proposed a research topic area that was sociological in nature and had one or more relevant target groups (age, gender, indigenous, youth, etc.)
- maintained a robust, sociological focus throughout

Weaker candidates:

- often did not specifically identify the required topic from the three in the Guidelines
- did not choose a sociological topic (e.g. health studies focus)
- did not have an adequately targeted focus
- introduced a hypothesis, using Psychology terminology and methodological processes within the report – some candidates claimed their hypothesis was supported when the research showed the opposite. Presenting a hypothesis tended to limit the capacity to have a nuanced and detailed discussion, as the hypothesis dominated the structure rather than allowing for a robust and critical examination of the research findings.

General advice to candidates:

- Candidates are advised to seek detailed advice and approval on their topic as some topics were not sociological, or were questionable.
- The Introduction should clearly outline the topic, research question and social category being investigated.
• The Introduction should include a brief literature review of recent research into the issue and relevant sociological concepts related to the specific aspect of inequality to be researched. Many Introductions were too long (exceeding 600 words) Students should aim for less than 400 words as a general guide.

• Reliance on online and non-sociological sources for definitions should be discouraged – students should go to a sociological source.

• Lengthy explanations of terms such as gender/inequality took up valuable word count and did not contribute to the quality of the report and did not meet the requirements for a literature analysis.

Research Method and Design

Many reports explained the method thoroughly and in a logical order, including rationales for the questions asked in surveys and/or interviews. Weaker reports did not include enough information in this section, and/or did not provide any explanation for the questions asked (which should be included where the reason is not obvious) and/or included unnecessary/superfluous questions in their research instruments.

It was clear students were avoiding content analysis as primary research, which was a disappointing absence from the reports submitted.

It is important to remember that a single interview or survey is just as strong as multiple sources of primary research. Primary research that is focused on the topic of interest and shows effective questioning skills will perform more strongly against Criterion 5.

There are times when questions are included because they might potentially garner relevant or significant information; this is fine – however, questions that are obviously unnecessary or irrelevant should not be included. There were some ethical issues with questions being asked that were invasive, intrusive or inappropriate. In these instances providing a rationale and a disclaimer is not satisfactory; the questions should not be asked in the first place (for example, personal questions about assault, rape, domestic violence…).

Weaker folios were based around opinion poll questionnaires that lacked validity and did not demonstrate the relationship between inequality and their chosen topic. These relied on opinion and belief-based surveys rather than looking to other ways a topic might have been investigated.

When addressing ethical considerations it is not necessary to include pages of explanations regarding what the considerations mean.

Copies of research instruments should be included in the appendices; this was not always the case.

Written Report

Overall, reports were well structured and the sections appropriately labelled; the formatting requirements were adhered to. There were a few issues with appendices (material not referred to in the body of the report for example), but nothing major.

In the results section, there was a trend for including detailed statements of the results that included considerable analysis as well. Analysis does not belong in the results section, and these portions of text should be considered in the overall word count, which they were not because they were under the
‘results’ section. A simple statement indicating the trend is all that should be placed with each graph. Information that is shown on the graph and then reproduced underneath is unnecessary and detracts from the report.

Only graphs that are informative and contribute to the written report need to be included in the body of the report; it is not necessary to have ten graphs that then require an analysis of the results depicted in the ten graphs, leaving little space left for substantive discussion.

Graphs should be properly labelled including x and y axes. Information that has been tabled does not also need to be graphed – either one or the other. In some reports the graphs appeared to be screenshots of graphs from survey monkey or another survey tool – this is not ideal, online survey tools can be great but candidates should be able to make decisions themselves about how the data should be graphed.

Most results sections were completed with a high degree of accuracy however some responses had not converted the raw data into percentages and graphs often lacked all necessary elements (axis titles).

Interviews should be presented in table form so that themes, key ideas and quotes can be located together.

It is important that students explain the key findings and then link this back to the broader issue of inequality i.e. drawing conclusions explaining how their findings show evidence of the existence of patterned inequality. Weaker folios merely summarised the findings of their research and then discussed the limitations of their study without linking back the "big picture" question of how/why there exists an inequality. Explanations of the perspectives are not required in the report. However, the results should be discussed in relation to sociological theories, terms and concepts related to inequality e.g. racism, patriarchy, lack of power due to age or locality. Responses could have been stronger if more time was given to sociological analysis of inequalities rather than theoretical positions.

Stronger responses analysed the results from the primary research in the discussion and made links to existing data, analysis and sociological concepts.

References were somewhat variable; the vast majority of candidates did meet the requirement of using at least three different types of sources and sub-categorising these in their reference lists. In-text referencing was less consistent. Candidates are reminded to check the formatting of their in-text references and to include page numbers when referencing direct quotes.

Specific advice per Criteria

Criterion 5

Stronger candidates:

- developed a research instrument that specifically went to the heart of the research topic, whether this was an interview or a survey
- all survey and interview questions were highly relevant and well thought out, and had a level of complexity that showed a relationship/causality
- sorted interview content by theme and was shown in tables
- presented survey data in graphs to show relationships/causality (e.g. column graphs in percentages); graph notes were brief but displayed a clear trend
• provided a concise but detailed methodology. This included categorisation and definitions of groups (e.g. what constitutes rural/urban/regional; measures of SES; what categorises low, medium, high aspirations, etc.

• concisely addressed the ethical considerations; identified possible areas of concern and how risks would be mitigated

**Weaker candidates:**

• used simple research questions on a survey, that were often perceptual e.g. "Who does the housework at home?"

• used leading question phrasing (Do you believe...? / would you agree?)

• survey respondents referred to as contestants and questionnaires as quizzes

• often did not take full advantage of the data gained from the research by doing a small number of graphs (maybe one or two) when many more relevant questions in the survey were relevant to the research topic

• often used Google or survey monkey to deliver the research instrument, but did not fully process the data and simply reproduced simple pie charts, which failed to show a level of complexity where the possibility existed for relationships to be shown had a bar chart been used

• had elements of graphs missing (e.g. titles, axis labels, graphs in raw data, not percentages, no trend shown in graph notes)

• had very small sample sizes (e.g. 10 participants) or widely skewed samples (2 x males, 8 x females). If there is a procedural reason (such as lack of access to a wider population for research purposes) for a small sample size or a large imbalance between aspects of the sample such as gender or age this should be explained in the Research Method and Design section. It is not necessary to have exactly even numbers of respondents e.g. 10 urban and 10 rural, as results should be in percentages

• where interviews were conducted, did not sort the data by theme but was often simply copied and pasted into a table. Questions for the interviews should be written to address themes of the inequality being researched. These themes can then guide the organisation of information from the interview into tables

• provided lengthy explanation of the method that needed to be more concise

• used methods and lists of processes that mimicked a Psychology IP, including lists of materials and processes taken for ‘the experiment’

• did not address the ethical considerations (including the absence of the research instrument in the appendices).
Criterion 6

The focus of all projects should have been on inequality, and while many students were able to link relevant concepts (reduced life-chances, disadvantage etc.) to their research, others did not relate their own, or secondary sources to the topic. Students who had formed a strong research question appeared to have found this helped them to remain on track. There was also a trend for students not to define key concepts in their research – for example, explaining how ‘emotional load’ or ‘rural and urban’ were operationalised for their study. This may have contributed to another noticeable feature in some projects where a rather inconsequential discussion section failed to return to the key concepts and ideas presented earlier in a strong introduction.

Stronger candidates:

- used the entire Introduction to the maximum benefit as a literature review that explored the chosen topic in detail.
- maintained a balance between the Introduction and the Analysis and Discussion where by the literature review did not dominate the report (in some cases exceeding 600 words). It is recommended that the Introduction does not exceed 400 words so that the focus remains on reporting on the findings of the primary research.
- demonstrated their understanding of term and concepts implicitly throughout, which enabled the best use of the limited overall word count
- incorporated sociological terms, perspectives, theories and concepts into the Introduction and Discussion sections
- triangulated the findings of the primary research with the secondary research findings and sociological concepts and theories
- had a good balance between their primary research findings and secondary research, with very clear links made between the two
- provided a definitive answer to their research question, which was supported by the data and discussion

Weaker candidates:

- dedicated the majority of the Introduction to definitions, which often were from non-sociological sources such as on-line dictionaries
- did not fully engage in the secondary research process; often only one relevant source of research (if any) were included
- did not clearly make links between the primary research findings and secondary sources. This tended to take two forms: either a lengthy explanation of primary research results already shown in the results section or a revisit to the literature review from the Introduction without linking this to the results.
- did not incorporate any sociological concepts or theories into the Discussion findings
- had conclusions that were inconsistent with the actual primary research findings.
Criterion 7

Stronger candidates:

- included all required elements of the IP, as stated in the Guidelines
- followed the required layout with close attention to detail – including cover page, page numbers, headings and subheadings, appendices (e.g. survey, raw data, interview transcripts, etc.)
- had accurate spelling and grammar, with sophisticated use of punctuation
- used APA in-text citations and referencing with a high degree of accuracy; great attention to fine details of APA style was apparent, reference list and in-text citations cross-matched
- used the minimal number of words to the maximum effect to convey meaning, whilst retaining full grammatical integrity.

Weaker candidates:

- missed essential elements from the IP, including no cover page, not identifying the Topic and/or Focus Question and/or social group
- did not follow the required order or layout; many were missing a raw data appendix, some were missing their survey
- had inconsistent font size and style or line spacing
- wrote in the first person
- presentation of the research findings was often inconsistent or difficult to follow.
- grammatical, spelling and expression errors which could have been picked up with an electronic spell check
- used dated (1990 early 2000s) resources including statistical information when more recent sources are certainly available.