

CAMBRIDGE INTERNATIONAL EXAMINATIONS

Cambridge International Advanced Subsidiary and Advanced Level

MARK SCHEME for the October/November 2014 series

9699 SOCIOLOGY

9699/23

Paper 2 (Data Response), maximum raw mark 50

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Page 2	Mark Scheme	Syllabus	Paper
	Cambridge International AS/A Level – October/November 2014	9699	23

Section A

1 (a) What do sociologists mean by the term *reliability*? [2]

- 1 1 mark for a partial definition, such as 'methods that are repeated'.
- 2 Reliability refers to whether the same results would be produced if the research procedure were to be repeated. 2 marks for a clear, accurate definition.

An example on its own will not be credited. If an example is used to support a definition, thereby demonstrating understanding of the term, this should be credited.

(b) Describe two research topics that might be suitable for sociological investigation using content analysis. [4]

2 marks available for each way. 1 mark for identification OR explanation only, two marks for identification AND explanation.

- 1 Likely research topics might include:
 - The representation/portrayal of different social groups, e.g. gender, ethnicity, class, disability, etc. These may be quantitative or qualitative analyses
 - Moral panics;
 - Cases of bias and distortion in news reporting;
 - Media influences on youth culture
 - Any other reasonable response.
- 2 1 mark for the example plus 1 mark for development (2 × 2 marks).

(c) Explain why a sociologist may use experiments as a research method. [8]

0–4 These may include points such as:

- Ease of controlling and manipulating variables;
- Ability to identify causation;
- Reliability;
- Scientific status of the research method;
- Appropriate for the subject being studied;
- Accords with the sociologist's theoretical perspective, etc.

Lower in the band answers will lack any reference to the reasons why a sociologist may choose to use experiments.

Higher in the band, one or two reasons simply stated may be worth 3 or 4 marks.

5–8 Lower in the band a range of relevant points will cover a greater depth of understanding although the range may lack breadth or sufficient explanation.

Higher in the band, candidates will clearly identify appropriate points. The reasons given will be well-developed and show very good sociological understanding.

Page 3	Mark Scheme	Syllabus	Paper
	Cambridge International AS/A Level – October/November 2014	9699	23

A good list of undeveloped points may gain up to six marks. To go higher, there needs to be development of three or more points.

N.B. This question asks candidates to 'explain', therefore there is no requirement for assessment.

(d) Assess the claim that in sociological research quantitative data is superior to qualitative data. [11]

0–4 Answers at this level are likely to show only limited appreciation of the issues raised by the question.

Lower in the band, a few simple points about the use of quantitative data in sociological research is all we may expect at this level. Answers will demonstrate very little understanding of the requirements of the question.

Higher in the band, an answer might, for example, advance a couple of practical factors, without further development.

5–8 Lower in the band, one type of answer at this level would take the form of a general descriptive account of the positivist perspective or of types of research methods.

Higher in the band, there are likely to be clear links made to the methods that produce each type of data and reference made to relevant key concepts. If this approach is complemented by a sound review of the anti-positivist position, the top of the band may be triggered.

A descriptive answer cannot gain more than 8 marks.

9–11 Lower in the band, candidates will demonstrate a good understanding of the distinction between quantitative and qualitative data, and will identify the strengths and limitations of both types of data. There will also be an attempt at assessment.

Higher in the band, the responses will be more incisive and well developed, and the assessment will be explicit and well informed. There is likely to be a well formulated conclusion that directly addresses the question and the meaning of superior.

Page 4	Mark Scheme	Syllabus	Paper
	Cambridge International AS/A Level – October/November 2014	9699	23

Section B

- 2 'The idea that class is the key factor influencing social identity has been over-stated by sociologists.' Explain and assess this view. [25]

Level 1

0–6 Lower in the band answers may be restricted to a few assertions about the nature of social identity with few or no links to social class.

Higher in the band, answers may offer a simple account of social class socialisation with no further development in relation to the question.

Level 2

7–12 Lower in the band, there may be a basic account of sociological theories that highlight class identity. This type of response is likely to include little or no reference to the issue of social class identity.

Higher in the band, the focus may be on Marxist accounts of how class identity is constructed. An answer that outlines the role of different agents of socialisation could reach the top of the band, without focusing directly on issues of social identity. Answers at this level are likely to be mainly or wholly descriptive. Answers at this level are unlikely to discuss the influence of issues other than social class identity.

Level 3

13–18 At this level, answers may focus on other sources of identity (gender, ethnicity, age, etc.) as evidence that class identity is now overstated or by reference to postmodern ideas of increased choice in identity formation. There may be discussion of a decline in identification in relation to consumption patterns and attitudes, perhaps linked to empirical evidence. Alternatively, answers may provide a sound account of the process of class-based socialisation with reference to the impact this has on social identity formation; this is likely to identify cultural differences between classes as well as some mention of how these may relate to life-chances and inequality.

Lower in the band, the answer is likely to be confined to describing the Marxist perspective (or different strands of Marxist theory or Weberianism).

Higher in the band, there should be some attempt to discuss the view that sociologists have over-stated the importance of class as a factor influencing social identity. However, the analysis may lack depth at this level.

There is no requirement for assessment at this level.

Page 5	Mark Scheme	Syllabus	Paper
	Cambridge International AS/A Level – October/November 2014	9699	23

Level 4

19–25 Answers at this level must achieve three things:

First, there will be good sociological knowledge and understanding.

Second, the material used will be interpreted accurately and applied effectively to answering the question.

Third, there must also be some evidence of assessment.

At this level there will be a good understanding of the competing arguments about the relative importance of class as a social identity. References to postmodernism may be used to good effect in supporting the view held in the question, or alternatively reference may be made to empirical research that indicates a decline in the influence of class-based identity. There will also be a sustained and incisive assessment of the view that sociologists have over-stated the importance of class as a key factor influencing social identity.

Lower in the band, the assessment is likely to rely on the juxtaposition of different sociological perspectives on social identity. This might include references to the post-modernist critique of grand sociological narratives, such as traditional Marxist theory. Responses may focus on the ways in which gender, age and ethnicity may shape a person's identity more than their class; or the implied passivity of individuals being socialised into their identity.

Higher in the band, the assessment may include a more direct analysis of the extent to which any reduction in subjective feeling about class identity does not necessarily mean that class position is any less important in objective terms.

There is likely to be a well formulated conclusion.

3 'The interpretivist approach to how the social world should be studied provides us with the most accurate sociological understanding of society.' Explain and assess this view. [25]

Level 1

0–6 Lower in the band, an answer may be limited to a few simple points about sociological theory in general.

Higher in the band, a marginally better answer at this level would contain a few broadly accurate references to the interpretivist perspective specifically, though with little or no development in relation to the question.

Level 2

7–12 Lower in the band, there will be a simple descriptive account of the main features of the interpretivist perspective.

Higher in the band, the account will be more accurate and developed. It is not necessary to distinguish between different strands of interpretivism (phenomenology, ethnomethodology, symbolic interactionism) at this level, although there should be evidence of a basic awareness of the debate implied in the question, i.e. that between an interpretivist and (most likely) a positivist perspective.

Page 6	Mark Scheme	Syllabus	Paper
	Cambridge International AS/A Level – October/November 2014	9699	23

Level 3

13–18 Lower in the band, the bulk of the answer may consist of a descriptive account of the interpretivist perspective with a probable contrast drawn with positivism.

Higher in the band, there will be an attempt to analyse the view described in the question, and there should be a clear focus on the notion of what is an ‘accurate’ understanding. There is likely to be a discussion of interpretivism in the context of the status of sociology as a discipline and links made to the debate about its scientific credentials. Links may also be made to the action vs structure debate (structuration). However, the analysis may lack depth and the range of points covered will be limited.

There is no requirement for assessment at this level.

Level 4

19–25 Answers at this level must achieve three things:

First, there will be good sociological knowledge and understanding.

Second, the material used will be interpreted accurately and applied effectively to answering the question.

Third, there must also be some evidence of assessment.

At this level there will be a good understanding of the interpretivist perspective and provide a sustained assessment of the claim made in the question, and of its overall strengths and limitations. Clearly, the debate is likely to focus the positivist vs anti-positivist debate.

Lower in the band this may be delivered largely through juxtaposition.

Higher in the band the wording of the question will be addressed in a sustained and nuanced way. Sophistication may be demonstrated by, for example, distinguishing between different strands of interpretivism or by making good use of references to appropriate interpretivist studies to illustrate the value or otherwise of the approach.

There is likely to be a well formulated conclusion.