



AS SOCIOLOGY 7191/1

Paper 1 Education with Methods in Context

Mark scheme

June 2026

Version: 1.0 Final

Mark schemes are prepared by the Lead Assessment Writer and considered, together with the relevant questions, by a panel of subject teachers. This mark scheme includes any amendments made at the standardisation events which all associates participate in and is the scheme which was used by them in this examination. The standardisation process ensures that the mark scheme covers the students' responses to questions and that every associate understands and applies it in the same correct way. As preparation for standardisation each associate analyses a number of students' scripts. Alternative answers not already covered by the mark scheme are discussed and legislated for. If, after the standardisation process, associates encounter unusual answers which have not been raised they are required to refer these to the Lead Examiner.

It must be stressed that a mark scheme is a working document, in many cases further developed and expanded on the basis of students' reactions to a particular paper. Assumptions about future mark schemes on the basis of one year's document should be avoided; whilst the guiding principles of assessment remain constant, details will change, depending on the content of a particular examination paper.

No student should be disadvantaged on the basis of their gender identity and/or how they refer to the gender identity of others in their exam responses.

A consistent use of 'they/them' as a singular and pronouns beyond 'she/her' or 'he/him' will be credited in exam responses in line with existing mark scheme criteria.

Further copies of this mark scheme are available from aqa.org.uk

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Level of response marking instructions

Level of response mark schemes are broken down into levels, each of which has a descriptor. The descriptor for the level shows the average performance for the level. There are marks in each level.

Before you apply the mark scheme to a student's answer read through the answer and annotate it (as instructed) to show the qualities that are being looked for. You can then apply the mark scheme.

Step 1 Determine a level

Start at the lowest level of the mark scheme and use it as a ladder to see whether the answer meets the descriptor for that level. The descriptor for the level indicates the different qualities that might be seen in the student's answer for that level. If it meets the lowest level then go to the next one and decide if it meets this level, and so on, until you have a match between the level descriptor and the answer. With practice and familiarity you will find that for better answers you will be able to quickly skip through the lower levels of the mark scheme.

When assigning a level you should look at the overall quality of the answer and not look to pick holes in small and specific parts of the answer where the student has not performed quite as well as the rest. If the answer covers different aspects of different levels of the mark scheme you should use a best fit approach for defining the level and then use the variability of the response to help decide the mark within the level, ie if the response is predominantly level 3 with a small amount of level 4 material it would be placed in level 3 but be awarded a mark near the top of the level because of the level 4 content.

Step 2 Determine a mark

Once you have assigned a level you need to decide on the mark. The descriptors on how to allocate marks can help with this. The exemplar materials used during standardisation will help. There will be an answer in the standardising materials which will correspond with each level of the mark scheme. This answer will have been awarded a mark by the Lead Examiner. You can compare the student's answer with the example to determine if it is the same standard, better or worse than the example. You can then use this to allocate a mark for the answer based on the Lead Examiner's mark on the example.

You may well need to read back through the answer as you apply the mark scheme to clarify points and assure yourself that the level and the mark are appropriate.

Indicative content in the mark scheme is provided as a guide for examiners. It is not intended to be exhaustive and you must credit other valid points. Students do not have to cover all of the points mentioned in the Indicative content to reach the highest level of the mark scheme.

An answer which contains nothing of relevance to the question must be awarded no marks.

Qu	Marking guidance	Total marks
01	Define the term 'free school'. 2 marks for a satisfactory definition such as: schools set up by non-government agencies that have freedom in how they operate but are funded by the state. 1 mark for a partial definition, eg schools run by parents, charitable or religious organisations. 0 marks for no/an unsatisfactory definition.	2

Qu	Marking guidance	Total marks
02	Using one example, briefly explain how placing pupils in sets may affect their experience of school. 2 marks for a clearly explained example or 1 mark for a partially explained example. Answers may include: • pupils may internalise negative expectations from teachers (1 mark); this may lead to disengagement from school life (+1 mark) • pupils may be given a simplified curriculum (1 mark); this may lack the rigour needed to achieve higher grades (+1 mark) • pupils may be placed with peers who are less motivated (1 mark); this may lead to disruptive behaviour (+1 mark) • pupils may work at a faster pace (1 mark); this may enable them to develop pro-educational values, such as a strong work ethic (+1 mark). Other relevant material should be credited. 0 marks for no relevant points.	2

Qu	Marking guidance	Total marks
03	Outline three ways schools promote social solidarity. 2 marks for each of three appropriate ways clearly outlined or 1 mark for appropriate ways partially outlined such as: • schools observe key dates (1 mark); by observing Black History Month or Remembrance Day (1 mark) • schools create a shared identity (1 mark); through dress codes or uniforms (+1 mark) • schools encourage teamwork (1 mark); through enrichment activities like team sports or school plays (+1 mark) • schools teach shared norms and values (1 mark); by setting standards of behaviour (+1 mark) • schools transmit shared culture (1 mark); through teaching lessons such as History or Citizenship (+1 mark) • schools promote social integration (1 mark); by bringing together pupils from different backgrounds (+1 mark). Other relevant material should be credited. 0 marks for no relevant points.	6

Qu	Marking guidance	Total marks
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04	Outline and explain two ways in which government educational policies may reduce inequalities between pupils.	10
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Marks	Level descriptors
8–10	Answers in this band will show very good knowledge and understanding of two ways in which government educational policies may reduce inequalities between pupils. There will be two applications of relevant material, eg compensatory education policies aim to help disadvantaged pupils by providing extra support; policies such as GIST and WISE aimed to reduce gender inequalities in subject choice. There will be appropriate analysis, eg the reasoned conclusion that educational policies put in place to address inequalities between pupils may have a limited impact, for example not tackling the root cause of inequality.
4–7	Answers in this band will show a reasonable to good knowledge and understanding of one or two ways in which government educational policies may reduce inequalities between pupils. There will be one or two applications of relevant material, eg Pupil Premium provides extra funding to schools to support disadvantaged pupils. There will be some basic analysis.
1–3	Answers in this band will show limited knowledge and little or no understanding of the question or the material. There will be limited focus on the question, eg there may be some drift into a discussion of inequalities between different social groups. There will be little or no analysis.
0	No relevant points.

Indicative content

Answers may include the following and/or other relevant points:

- compensatory education policies may help disadvantaged pupils by providing extra support
- GIST and WISE may help to reduce gender inequalities in subject choice
- Pupil Premium may support disadvantaged pupils by providing extra funding
- Sure Start may provide early support for children from disadvantaged backgrounds
- Aim Higher may encourage disadvantaged pupils to consider higher education
- comprehensive schools may offer all pupils equal access to the same quality of education
- National Curriculum ensures all pupils study the same core subjects to the same standard
- increase in school leaving age ensures all pupils are in education or training longer, benefitting disadvantaged pupils.

Sources may include the following or other relevant ones:

Ball; Boaler; David; Gewirtz; Kelly; Leech and Campos; Mirza; Troyna and Williams; Whitty.

Qu	Marking guidance	Total marks
05	Applying material from Item A and your knowledge, evaluate the view that social class differences in educational achievement are mainly a result of external factors.	20

Item A

There is a difference in achievement between working-class pupils and middle-class pupils at every stage of school life. Some sociologists suggest that educational differences between social classes are the result of external factors, such as a lack of resources. Some families cannot afford private tutors or textbooks which can affect some pupils' academic achievement. Parental attitudes towards education may also play a part.

However, some sociologists have suggested that factors in school such as teachers' expectations might have a greater impact on achievement.

Marks	Level descriptors
17–20	Answers in this band will show sound, conceptually detailed knowledge of a range of relevant material on the view that social class differences in educational achievement are mainly a result of external factors. Good understanding of the question and of the presented material will be shown. Appropriate material will be applied accurately to the issues raised in the question. Analysis and evaluation will be explicit and relevant. Evaluation may be developed, for example through a discussion of the relative importance of different external factors compared to internal factors and the relationship between the two. Analysis will show clear explanation and may draw appropriate conclusions.
13–16	Answers in this band will show broad or deep, accurate but incomplete knowledge of the view that social class differences in educational achievement are mainly a result of external factors. Understands a number of significant aspects of the question; reasonable understanding of the presented material. Application of material is largely explicit relevant to the question though some material may be inadequately focused. Some limited explicit evaluation, eg how external factors have different effects on pupils in different social classes, and/or some appropriate analysis, eg clear explanations of some of the presented material.

9–12	Answers in this band will show largely accurate knowledge but limited range and depth, eg a broadly accurate, if basic, account of one or two external factors for social class differences in educational achievement. Understands some limited but significant aspects of the question; superficial understanding of the presented material. Applying material (possibly in a list-like fashion) from the general topic area but with limited regard for its relevance to the issues raised by the question, or applying a narrow range of more relevant material. Evaluation limited at most to juxtaposition of competing positions or to one or two isolated stated points. Analysis will be limited with answers tending towards the descriptive.
5–8	Answers in this band will show limited undeveloped knowledge, eg two to three insubstantial points about social class differences in educational achievement. Understands only very limited aspects of the question; simplistic understanding of the presented material. Limited application of suitable material, and/or material often at a tangent to the demands of the question. Minimal or no evaluation. Attempts at analysis, if any, are thin and disjointed.
1–4	Answers in this band will show very limited knowledge, eg one to two very insubstantial points about education in general. Very little or no understanding of the question and of the presented material. Significant errors, omissions, and/or incoherence in application of material. There will be no analysis or evaluation.
0	No relevant points.

Indicative content

Concepts and issues such as the following may appear:

material deprivation; diet and nutrition; housing; cultural deprivation; cultural capital; speech codes; parental values; working-class subculture; compensatory educational policies; A-to-C economy; educational triage; labelling; self-fulfilling prophecy; setting and streaming; differentiation; polarisation; pupil subcultures; symbolic capital; Nike identities; symbolic violence; habitus; selection.

Sources may include the following or other relevant ones:

Archer et al; Ball; Becker; Bernstein; Bourdieu; Douglas; Dunne and Gazeley; Evans; Feinstein; Gillborn and Youdell; Hargreaves; Hempel-Jorgensen; Hubbs-Tait et al; Hyman; Ingram; Lacey; Leech and Campos; Reay; Rist; Rosenthal and Jacobson; Sugarman; Sullivan; Willis; Woods.

Qu	Marking guidance	Total marks
06	Applying material from Item B and your knowledge of research methods, evaluate the strengths and limitations of using structured interviews to investigate the experiences of ethnic minority pupils in school.	20

Item B

Investigating the experiences of ethnic minority pupils in school

Pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds may have differing experiences of school for a variety of reasons. For example, some Black pupils may feel they are negatively labelled by teachers who were quicker to discipline them for poor behaviour. Some Asian pupils may feel marginalised because of the lack of teaching of Asian languages. However, some ethnic minority pupils thrive in school and have positive experiences.

One way of studying the experiences of ethnic minority pupils in school is to use structured interviews. This type of interview is standardised and can produce large amounts of quantitative data. However, some pupils may not feel comfortable sharing their experiences. Furthermore, this method can lack the flexibility to ask follow-up questions.

Marks	Level descriptors
17–20	Answers in this band will show accurate, conceptually detailed knowledge and good understanding of a range of relevant material on structured interviews to investigate the experiences of ethnic minority pupils in school. Appropriate material will be applied accurately and with sensitivity to the investigation of the specific issue of ethnic minority pupils' experiences in school. Students will apply knowledge of a range of relevant strengths and limitations of using structured interviews to research issues and characteristics related to ethnic minority pupils' experiences in school. These may include some of the following and/or other relevant concerns though answers do not need to include all of these, even for full marks: • the research characteristics of potential research subjects, eg individual pupils, peer groups, parents, teachers • the research context and settings, eg classrooms, staff rooms, schools • the sensitivity of researching ethnic minority pupils' experiences in school eg language barriers, informed consent, school's reputation, vulnerability of participants. Evaluation of the usefulness of structured interviews will be explicit and relevant. Analysis will show clear explanations and may draw appropriate conclusions.

13–16	Answers in this band will show accurate, broad and/or deep but incomplete knowledge of the strengths and limitations of structured interviews. Understands a number of significant aspects of the question; reasonable understanding of the presented material. Application of knowledge will be broadly appropriate but will tend to be applied in a more generalised way or a more restricted way, for example: • applying the method to the study of education in general, not to the specifics of studying ethnic minority pupil experiences in school, or • specific but undeveloped application to the experiences of ethnic minority pupils in school, or • a focus on the research characteristics of the experiences of ethnic minority pupils in school or groups/context involved in it. There will be some limited explicit evaluation, eg of one to two features of structured interviews as a method, and/or some appropriate analysis, eg clear explanations of some of the features of structured interviews.
9–12	Answers in this band will show largely accurate knowledge but limited range and depth, including a broadly accurate, if basic, account of some of the strengths and/or limitations of structured interviews. Understands some limited but significant aspects of the question; superficial understanding of the presented material. Applying material (possibly in a list-like fashion) on structured interviews but with very limited or non-existent application to either the study of the experiences of ethnic minority pupils in particular or of education in general. Evaluation limited at most to briefly stated points. Analysis will be limited, with answers tending towards the descriptive.
5–8	Answers in this band will show limited undeveloped knowledge, eg two to three insubstantial points about some features of structured interviews. Understands only limited aspects of the question; simplistic understanding of the presented material. Very limited application of suitable material, and/or material often at a tangent to the demands of the question, eg perhaps drifting into an unfocused comparison of different methods. Very limited or no evaluation. Attempts at analysis, if any, are thin and disjointed.
1–4	~~Answers in this band will show very limited knowledge, eg one to two very insubstantial points about methods in general. Very little or no understanding of the question and of the presented material.~~ Significant errors and/or omissions in application of material. Some material ineffectually recycled from the item, or some knowledge applied solely to the substantive issue of investigating the experiences of ethnic minority pupils in school with very little or no reference to structured interviews. There will be no analysis or evaluation. No relevant points.
0	

Indicative content

Strengths and limitations of structured interviews, as applied to the particular issue in education,

may include: time, cost, access, location of the interviews, quantitative data, positivism, reliability, closed questions, standardisation, flexibility, validity, representativeness, sample size, ethical issues (eg informed consent, protection from harm, confidentiality and anonymity), interviewer bias, social desirability bias, and language barriers.

Assessment Objectives

	AO1	AO2	AO3	Total
Paper 1				
Education				
Q01	2			2
Q02		2		2
Q03	3	3		6
Q04	5	3	2	10
Q05	8	6	6	20
Q06 MIC	8	8	4	20
Totals	26	22	12	60