

Specimen Paper Answers – Paper 2

Cambridge IGCSE™

Sociology 0495

Cambridge O Level

Sociology 2251

For examination from 2025



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Introduction

These specimen answers have been produced by Cambridge ahead of the examination in 2025 to exemplify standards for those teaching Cambridge IGCSE / O Level Sociology. We have provided examples of very good answers for Specimen Paper 2, Questions 1 and 3.

The marks given are for guidance only and are accompanied by a brief commentary explaining the strengths and weaknesses of the answers. Comments are given to indicate where and why marks were awarded, and how additional marks could be obtained.

The mark scheme for the Specimen Paper is available to download from the [School Support Hub](#).

2025 Specimen Paper 2

2025 Specimen Paper Mark Scheme 2

Past exam resources and other teaching and learning resources are available on the [School Support Hub](#).

Details of the assessment

The syllabus for Cambridge IGCSE / O Level Sociology is available at www.cambridgeinternational.org

Paper 2 Family, Education and Crime

Written paper, 1 hour 45 minutes, 80 marks

Paper 2 has three questions. Candidates choose to answer **two** of the three questions.

The questions are on the following topics:

Question 1 Family

Question 2 Education

Question 3 Crime, deviance and social control

Each question has six parts (a – f). Each question has the same structure.

Each question is worth 40 marks.

Parts (a) and (b) require short answers. They test candidates' knowledge and understanding of terms, ideas and examples, and require candidates to select and apply their sociological knowledge to a specific area of the topic. These questions assess AO1 and AO2 skills.

Parts (c) and (d) require candidates to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of sociological concepts, theories, evidence and views within a specified area of the topic. Candidates should be encouraged to refer to sociological evidence and examples in their answer.

These questions assess AO1 and AO2 skills.

Part (e) requires candidates to discuss a sociological issue or view. Candidates will need to write about issues or topics in depth in a structured way and support their ideas with relevant evidence.

This question assesses AO1, AO2 and AO3 skills.

Part (f) is a short essay-style question. Candidates will need to be able to develop reasoned arguments on both sides of a debate and support their points with relevant sociological evidence.

This question assesses AO1, AO2 and AO3 skills.

Question 1

Question 1(a)

Define the term:

- | | | |
|------|-------------------|-----|
| (i) | empty nest family | [2] |
| (ii) | patriarchy | [2] |

Specimen answer

- (i) *An empty nest family is where the children have left home leaving just the parents living together in the home.*
- (ii) *Patriarchy is a feminist term. It means that the family is male dominated, benefiting men more than women.*

Mark awarded = 4 out of 4

Examiner comment

To achieve full marks on these 'definition' questions, candidates must ensure that there are two clear and accurate elements provided for each term, as in the examples above (e.g. in (i) children have left home and parents living in the home). These elements can also include pertinent examples to show understanding of and links to the topic, such as in the (ii) patriarchy example above where the family is explicitly mentioned. However, the answer for Question 1(a)(ii) would also have got 2 marks had it said 'a feminist term meaning men have more power than women' as it still has the essential two elements (feminist term and men have more power).

Common mistakes

Not having two elements in the definition of the term.

Question 1(b)

Give **two** examples of negative sanctions used in the family to control children.

[2]

Specimen answer

Two negative sanctions are being told off by parents and being sent to prison.

Mark awarded = 1 out of 2

Examiner comment

Both examples are negative sanctions but only the first can be credited in this answer because being sent to prison is not a negative sanction used in the family to control children. It is important that candidates read the question carefully before starting to write their response.

Common mistakes

Not linking the example to the context of the question. The second example of a negative sanction in the specimen answer above (being sent to prison) is not an appropriate sanction for controlling children in the family.

Question 1(c)

Describe **three** types of marriage.

[6]

Specimen answer

One type of marriage is monogamy. This means being married to one person at a time. It is the most common type of marriage in Western societies. A second type of marriage is an arranged marriage. This is where the couple to be married are selected by other people, typically family members or elders. These marriages are most popular in Eastern cultures. Some countries also have polygamy as a type of marriage.

Mark awarded = 5 out of 6

Examiner comment

The candidate clearly signals where each of the three types of marriage have been identified. This is good practice, although 'polygamy' is not as clearly identified as a type of marriage. Three different types of marriage have been accurately identified in the response. Both monogamy and arranged marriages are described accurately and receive full marks. Polygamy only scores the 'identify' mark because the candidate does not give any description of what a polygamous marriage is.

Common mistakes

- Not describing all the three points mentioned in the answer. In the specimen answer above polygamy is identified but not described.
- Not using signal words (e.g. one type of marriage...a second type...etc) to help the examiner see each of the three types of marriage described by the candidate.

Question 1(d)

Explain **three** criticisms of the feminist view of the family.

[6]

Specimen answer

Feminists claim that the family is patriarchal. However, studies such as Willmott and Young's symmetrical family show that this is not always the case. As joint conjugal roles become more normalised, so the family becomes more equal.

Also, families today are very diverse. Feminists typically criticise the nuclear family, but this is not the dominant family type any longer. Lone parent families, for example, challenge feminist ideas of the family having segregated conjugal and traditional gender roles and are actually much more flexible in how family life operates, allowing women to make their own decisions.

Finally, feminism can also be criticised because the role of men has changed in many societies and families. Hegemonic masculinity, where males make all the decisions and control the females in the family, are now outdated. New men and househusbands are increasingly common. This challenges the feminist description of family life.

Mark awarded = 6 out of 6

Examiner comment

This answer scores full marks for several reasons. Firstly, it provides three criticisms of the feminist view of the family that are well signalled. These are clearly different ideas that do not overlap. Each criticism is well developed, which illustrates strong knowledge and understanding from the candidate. Sociological concepts run throughout the response (e.g. diversity, hegemonic, patriarchal).

Common mistakes

- Allowing points or examples to overlap by not writing in separate paragraphs or not using signal words.
- Not answering all the elements of the question, for example, not making the required number of criticisms.

Question 1(e)

Discuss how family functions have changed over time.

Your answer should include:

- at least **three** developed points with evidence.

[8]

Specimen answer

The family performs several essential functions for society, but these functions are changing. Reproduction is no longer seen by couples as essential and childless families have become more common in societies across the globe. In Beijing, China, it is now estimated that 1 in 10 families are dual income, no kids – sociologists use the phrase ‘DINK families’ to describe this. One reason for this trend is that many women are choosing to focus on their careers rather than motherhood, meaning that reproduction is seen as less important. The negative stigma of being a childless woman is also disappearing.

Socialising children remains a key function of society, but it is no longer essential that socialisation is done by the family. Dual worker families are now often the norm. This means that other institutions are taking on much of the primary socialisation work that was once performed by families. For example, many children now attend pre-school or nursery and learn norms and values there. Specialist media for young children is also rapidly developing and is easily accessible via TV or online streaming. This is widely consumed and is another source of socialisation for children.

Finally, the function of emotional care and practical support is no longer solely performed by the family. In many societies it is the norm for other institutions to perform this function. A good example of this is care homes and retirement homes, where elderly family members are looked after by non-family members. Also, if a family member loses their job and suffers from financial hardship it is typically the welfare state that supports them, not family members. Many sociologists believe that schools, not families, are a main source of both emotional care and social control for young people. Student support services counsel, advise and support young people.

Mark awarded = 8 out of 8

Examiner comment

This is a well-structured answer that shows good sociological knowledge and understanding and is focused on the question throughout.

Each of the three points is clearly identified and discussed in separate paragraphs. All are accurate and use sociological concepts and language to express the ideas.

The candidate has covered three points and has ensured that each point is supported by evidence and examples. Analysis is logical and coherent throughout. This means that all points are 'well developed', as stipulated in the Level 3 descriptor. The answer therefore scores the full 8 marks.

Common mistakes

- Writing more than three points but with only partial development.
- Wasting time on unnecessary introductions and/or conclusions.
- Criticising the view in the question when no marks are available for this.

Question 1(f)

Evaluate the view that the extended family is the best for society.

Your answer should include:

- at least **three** arguments for the view and **three** arguments against the view
- a conclusion.

[14]

Specimen answer

An extended family refers to multi-generational families. Sociologist Ballard found that South Asian families are typically extended and offer support to relations far and wide. The extended family often has strong emotional bonds and the expectation is of mutual care and support between family members. This results in extended family members intervening in personal matters when it is considered necessary. It is thought, for example, that divorce rates are low in South Asian families partly because of the influence and interventions of extended family members. Functionalists say this is good for society.

Another reason many sociologists believe the extended family is the best for society is because of the many functions it can perform. Having more people in the family to help perform these functions makes it more effective. For example, the function of childcare can be shared among family members, meaning that the working couple do not have to pay for nurseries and children are socialised by grandparents or other relatives. Similarly, the function of caring for the elderly can be done by family members, often in the family home, meaning there is no need for the elderly to be sent to a care home where they may be lonely and socially isolated. Finally, extended families can help each other financially. This prevents family members from getting into debt and so is a positive for both individuals and society.

A third reason for extended families being the best links to the new form of extended family, called the modified extended family. This allows family members who are separated by distance to keep in touch through technology. This is more effective than the privatised nuclear family that is often separated from its relations.

However, not all sociologists agree that the extended family is the best. In the media it is the nuclear family that we see presented as the ideal, 'cereal packet' family. It is represented as a model of the type of family we should all aspire to, with a mother, father and their dependent children. Functionalists such as Murdock say this is because it is only the privatised nuclear family that can successfully perform society's essential functions, such as primary socialisation. While these functions can be done in an extended family too, it is not as successful there because of the lack of privacy and disagreement that come with living with

multiple family members. A nuclear family performs these functions more smoothly and without conflict.

Feminists also disagree that the extended family is the best for society. They think it is just another example of a family type that exploits women. Women are traditionally expected to be the primary home-makers, perform childcare and be the source of emotional support. In an extended family this triple shift is worse for women. For example, women may have to be carers to their husband, children, elderly parents, and sometimes other relations such as uncles or aunts. Feminists think the single parent family is best for society, where women can make their own decisions, empower their children and create a family environment free from power dynamics and exploitation.

Lastly, the extended family can be criticised because it is too big. This makes it hard for people to live together harmoniously and can instead be a source of conflict for family members.

To conclude, it is difficult to decide whether the extended family is the best for society. Society is now so diverse that it is unlikely that any one family type can be proclaimed as 'the best'. It is more likely that different cultures will think that certain family types are better than others and that individuals in varied situations will all have different views. I therefore believe it is impossible to say that one family type, such as extended, is better than another.

Mark awarded = 12 out of 14

Examiner comment

This answer does enough to score in the top band of the mark scheme. It follows the rubric of the question well and is consistently well-focused upon the demands of the question. Points are distinct and clear throughout.

This candidate has decided to deal with the three selected 'for' points first and then to follow with the three chosen 'against' points, finishing with a conclusion. This is a perfectly acceptable approach to the structure of the answer. An alternative approach would be to follow each 'for' point with an 'against' point and then conclude.

On both the 'for' and 'against' sides of the debate the candidate is writing sociologically and refers to relevant theory and concepts in order to explicitly demonstrate sociological knowledge and understanding.

On both sides of the debate the first two points made are very well developed and analysed. However, the third point on each side is less successful as it does not fully explore the issue raised, particularly on the 'against' side of the debate. This impacts upon the mark awarded as not all points made are fully developed.

The conclusion is strong and considers the evidence in order to reach a judgement on the question. This means the answer can score at the bottom of the top band.

Common mistakes

- Not answering all the specified elements of the question, for example, not making three arguments for and three against with a conclusion.
- Not writing arguments in paragraphs, which makes it difficult to distinguish where one point begins and ends.
- Not developing points with enough evidence or sociological concepts.

Total mark awarded for Question 1 = 36 out of 40

Question 3

Question 3(a)

Define the term:

- (i) deviance [2]
- (ii) postmodernism. [2]

Specimen answer

- (i) *Deviance means breaking society's norms and values. For example, stealing goods from a shop.*
- (ii) *Postmodernism is a sociological theory that tries to show how society has changed in an era beyond modernity.*

Mark awarded = 4 out of 4

Examiner comment

Both terms have been accurately defined with two clear elements in each. The answer to 'deviance' includes an example to show clear understanding of the term. The answer to 'postmodernism' includes recognition that the term is a theory and also includes a reference to the importance of the media.

Common mistakes

Only providing an example and not defining the term – this would achieve 1 mark and be classed as a 'partial' answer.

Question 3(b)

Give **two** examples of surveillance used for controlling crime.

[2]

Specimen answer

CCTV and police helicopters are used to control crime.

Mark awarded = 2 out of 2

Examiner comment

Lots of possible answers could have been given to the question. It is important to note, however, that only answers which relate to controlling crime would be credited.

Common mistakes

Wasting time by describing or explaining the examples, which is not necessary. The command word is 'give' and therefore it is only the accurate examples given that will gain credit.

Question 3(c)

Explain **three** reasons why poverty might lead to crime.

[6]

Specimen answer

The New Right, and Charles Murray in particular, argue that poor people commit crime because they are part of the underclass. They argue that the underclass have not been adequately socialised and so are often workshy and lazy. This makes them dependent on benefits which leads them to commit crimes instead of working.

Marxists think poverty leads to material deprivation which may lead to crime. This means that poor people may not have enough money or food to survive and so they turn to crime in order to feed their family, for example through shoplifting.

Poor people may also feel angry at the position they are in and their lack of status in society. Cohen says they suffer from status frustration. They commit crime because of the unfairness of the system and their resentment towards it.

Mark awarded = 6 out of 6

Examiner comment

This answer follows the command word in the question. The three reasons why poverty might lead to crime are clearly signalled and each one is explained sociologically. The candidate uses theory successfully to demonstrate very good understanding and substantiates this by referring to relevant sociologists (e.g. Murray and Cohen). It is a succinct answer that does exactly what the question asks.

Common mistakes

- Including unnecessary introductions and conclusions.
- Not clearly identifying what the three reasons are.
- Not explaining the points made sufficiently.

Question 3(d)

Explain **three** criticisms of the labelling theory of crime.

[6]

Specimen answer

The labelling theory of crime was developed by Becker to help sociologists understand why some people commit crime. The theory can be criticised because many crimes are committed by people who have not been negatively labelled. Marxists use examples of white-collar and corporate crime to illustrate this. People who commit white-collar and corporate crimes have not had a negative social reaction as they have high status in society, but they still commit crime. Not everyone who has been negatively labelled as a criminal lives up to that label. People can reject and self-negate the labels they have been given and may not commit crime, but instead may conform to society's norms and values. This means that labelling theory can be criticised for being too deterministic.

Mark awarded = 5 out of 6

Examiner comment

The candidate clearly understands labelling theory and is able to criticise it sociologically. The answer refers to a different theoretical explanation as well as using sociological concepts such as status, social reactions, conformity, self-negation and white-collar/corporate crimes accurately.

The lack of signal words means it is difficult to be sure where one point begins and ends – for example, is determinism a separate point or is it part of the self-negating idea? Here, the candidate has been given the benefit of the doubt and has been given an identification mark for 'determinism', but does not score anything for explanation.

Common mistakes

- Not explaining all the three points mentioned in the answer.
- Not using signal words to help the examiner easily identify each of the three criticisms of labelling theory.
- Not making the points sufficiently different from one another.

Question 3(e)

Discuss the view that crime and deviance are relative.

Your answer should include:

- at least **three** developed points with evidence.

[8]

Specimen answer

Crime and deviance are not the same thing. Crime is breaking the law, and deviance is breaking norms and values. Interactionists believe that both crime and deviance are relative. Relative means that definitions of crime are not fixed and can change.

My first point is about situation. Whether or not something is defined as deviant depends on the situation. For example, a boxer knocking someone out through a heavy punch in the boxing ring is perfectly acceptable, yet this same man doing the same act on the street would be viewed as deviant.

Next is time/era. When something happens makes a big difference to whether the act is seen as deviant or not. Some things were seen as being deviant in the past but are not today, and vice versa. For example, not long ago smoking was a norm and was seen and allowed in most public places. People would often smoke after a meal in a restaurant and on buses and trains. Now, however, the law has changed in many countries. In the UK, cigarette smoking is banned from most public places and it has also become deviant to smoke. Many people now choose to vape instead.

Lastly culture is important to discuss. Not all cultures define criminal acts in the same way and so definitions of crime and deviance can be quite different. In Western societies, for example, adultery is not approved of; it is deviant, but it is not a criminal offence. In Japan if one spouse is unfaithful, both the unfaithful spouse and the cheating third party may have an obligation to pay damages to the non-cheating spouse. In Saudi Arabia courts have sentenced adulterers to flogging. This clearly demonstrates how crime and deviance are relative to culture.

Mark awarded = 7 out of 8

Examiner comment

The first paragraph clearly demonstrates the candidate's understanding of the key terms in the question, however it is quite lengthy and descriptive. Introductions like this are not needed; the candidate could have omitted the first two sentences and instead concentrated on showing their understanding of the term 'relative' with a good theory link to interactionism.

Each point made is clearly signalled, making the range of ideas easy to distinguish. The first point is correct but is lacking in development and analysis. For example, there is no explanation of why the same act in different situations would be viewed differently. The candidate could have added something like, 'Punching someone in the street would probably result in the man being arrested and charged with assault because in this situation the behaviour shown was not acceptable'.

The answer does not use much theory or many sociological concepts. However, the range of relevant examples to substantiate ideas is excellent and gains the candidate credit.

Common mistakes

- Not developing the points in enough depth and detail. Both part (d) and (e) questions require three points, but responses to part (e) questions are expected to include more development (evidence and analysis) of the points.
- Not using sociological terms and concepts in the explanations discussed.
- Not understanding what the term 'relative' means when applied to crime and deviance.

Question 3(f)

Evaluate the view that capital punishment is the most effective punishment for crime.

Your answer should include:

- at least **three** arguments for the view and **three** arguments against the view
- a conclusion.

[14]

Specimen answer

Some sociologists would argue that capital punishment is necessary if we are to reduce crime in society. They believe that society needs to take a tough approach to crime, such as through capital punishment, in order for crime rates to fall. If members of the public see that crime may be punishable by death then this is likely to act as a huge deterrent because people will be scared of the consequences of crime. This fear factor will encourage social conformity and so will control crime effectively. Zero tolerance approaches to crime and deviance are a good example of this 'get tough' approach.

Not every sociologist would agree with this. Marxists, for example, point out that statistics show that ethnic minority males are most likely to be sentenced to death. They say the system is discriminatory and that certain social groups are more likely to be targeted by the police, heavily sentenced by the courts and then placed on death row. This kind of selective law enforcement will not effectively punish criminals because it is not applied fairly to everyone. Corporate and white-collar criminals are unlikely to be prosecuted and so they will continue committing crime. Introducing capital punishment won't alter the behaviour of the elite and other higher-class criminals and so it can't be an effective punishment for crime.

However, capital punishment may be needed to deal with some of the most prolific criminals and most serious crimes in society. Such offenders need to understand that their behaviour will not be tolerated and capital punishment may be used in these cases to keep the public safe from their crimes. Functionalists believe it will act as a reminder of where the boundaries lie between acceptable and non-acceptable behaviour. Crimes such as murder and paedophilia are morally reprehensible and many believe that the perpetrators don't deserve to live. The only way the agencies of formal social control can demonstrate how unacceptable such crimes are is to send a strong message out through killing such offenders.

People who oppose capital punishment would say that it is unlikely to be an effective punishment for crime because of the large dark figure of crime revealed by victim surveys. The reality is that most crimes do not end in a prosecution or a sentence and therefore capital punishment cannot deal with all those offenders who never get caught or never face

prosecution. Additionally, it may be more of a punishment to keep prolific offenders alive, having to deal with the consequences of their actions. Many critics believe the death sentence is the easy option and therefore cannot be an effective punishment for crime.

Taking a different view, though, capital punishment may be a more effective punishment than prisons at reducing crime. Prisons are overcrowded in most societies and are often referred to as 'universities of crime'. Many prisoners become more, not less, criminally-minded in prison, proving that the system doesn't work. It also costs a lot of money to house prisoners. So, introducing capital punishment would be more effective because it would be less costly and it would prevent inmates leaving prison with every intention to commit further crimes.

One final criticism of capital punishment is that it would only ever be given to the most serious crimes in society and only if the evidence was undeniable. In other words, it would never apply to many criminals. A more effective punishment for crime is surely one that is relevant to more criminals. Many sociologists and social policy makers advocate for rehabilitation as this would give society an opportunity to try and 'mend' criminal behaviour through education and counselling. If this more preventative approach isn't taken then crimes will always continue to occur, regardless of capital punishment.

In conclusion, there are many reasons why capital punishment could reduce levels of crime in society, but there are also many criticisms of it that must be listened to.

Mark awarded = 13 out of 14

Examiner comment

This is a comprehensive response to the question that demonstrates excellent knowledge and understanding of the topic and the points remain firmly focused on the specific question asked.

Points are logically organised into clearly distinct paragraphs where ideas are analysed and developed well. Sociological theory and concepts are used to inform the debate alongside well-chosen examples.

This candidate has adopted the 'point for, point against, repeat' essay model which works well to keep the answer discursive and evaluative. Other approaches would also work, but this is a good example of how a candidate can stay fully focused and engaged.

The conclusion is the weakest part of the response and is the reason why this response would not score full marks. The candidate has fulfilled the requirement to include a conclusion to the answer, but it says very little and does not give an evidenced judgement on the claim in the question. A more effective conclusion would have been: 'In conclusion, capital punishment may well be effective at scaring members of society into not committing crimes, it can therefore help to regulate social behaviour and encourage conformity. However, this only applies to the most serious, and rare, crimes. Most crimes would never attract the death sentence and thus it has to be questioned whether capital punishment really is as effective as many sociologists would say.' That type of conclusion includes relevant information from the essay and makes a clear judgement on the claim in the question.

Common mistakes

Writing a one-sided response with no evaluation.

Wasting time on unnecessary introductions.

Not fully developing points made with evidence, sociological concepts and analysis.

Total mark awarded for Question 3 = 37 out of 40

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