

CARDIFF HIGH SCHOOL

AS Level Coursework

Unit 2533

Research Report

Self Supported Study Book

2005 / 2006

Introduction

This booklet has been produced to help you through your AS Level coursework. The idea of the coursework is to develop your analytical skills and to test your understanding of methodology.

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Exam Board Information

This section gives you factual information provided by the OCR Examination board. Please note for a fuller explanation please use the OCR website and follow the link to Sociology: www.ocr.org.uk

The Research Report may be offered as an alternative to the written examination in Unit 2534. The Research Report will represent 30% of the AS GCE and 15% of the full Advanced GCE. (So please remember when completing this coursework the grade counts towards your A Level!!)

In terms of the OCR AS Sociology Specifications, you need to note that the Board has the following to say about the nature, purpose and scope of the Research Report:

1. "The Research Report requires the candidate to report on a short piece of sociological research which they have chosen."
2. "The aim of the Report is to introduce candidates to the methodological choices and practical issues that arise in sociological research."
3. "The Report should be made in an area of sociology that is of interest to the candidate. It is usually helpful if the topic chosen is linked to Module 2532 or to an option in Module 2533."
4. "Candidates who intend to complete the full Advanced GCE course may wish to plan ahead to the Personal Study in Module 2538, though there is no requirement to link the two pieces of work."
5. "The mark scheme rewards candidates who demonstrate ethical awareness."
6. "The candidate's task is:
 - To identify a piece of completed sociological research;
 - To provide an outline summary of the research methodology adopted by the researcher, including the aims and objectives of the research, and to comment on these;
 - To provide a limited interpretation of the data and findings of the research;
 - To write the Report."

Where to start

Lessons

In lesson time you will be taught methodological research skills – all the key terminology and skills needed to conduct the research report will be delivered in those lessons – but it is up to you to take this knowledge and apply it to analysing the research of your choice

Research Sources

Before you can even start your research report you have to choose an appropriate piece of coursework. The exam board suggests that you use research that is relatively short and aimed at A Level students. Choosing research is a complex task and to make it easier the Sociology Department offers a number of sources that would be suitable for your research.

They are available from the student library and from Miss Quartly's mini library.

We suggest that you scan read all the documents and narrow the research down to the ones you are interested in and the ones you find the most straightforward to analyse.

Resource list:

1. **"A Sociological Study of Male Self Image"** by Matthew Laza
2. **"Money, Marriage and Ideology: Holding the purse strings?"** by Jan Pahl
3. **"Household Spending, Personal Spending and Control of Money in Marriage"** by Jan Pahl
4. **"Just Like a girl" (second edition 1994)** by S, Sharpe
5. **"All Day, Every Day: Factory and Family in the making of Women's Lives."** by S, Westwood (1984)
6. **"New Age Travellers"** by Greg Martin
7. **"'Not as nice as she was supposed to be': schoolgirls' friendships"** by Valerie Hey
8. **"Research, reality and 'hanging around'"** by Stephen Moore
9. **"Doing A-Level Sociology: The view from the students"** by Alan Hutchison
10. **"Transforming friendship – Are housemates the new family?"** by Sue Heath

Please note that some of these research projects are more complex than others and you may need to "work with"* a few before you find the one you are happy with.

You can choose other articles and research that are not listed above BUT you must seek JQ's approval before you attempt the report.

* This means making notes as you read! See section on organisation

Organisation

Initial Note taking:

Reference was made in the above section to making notes as you read – the easiest way to do this is to use this book – this will enable you to focus your notes, thoughts and criticisms on each research as you read it. With this solid base you should be able to make a more informed decision on which research to choose AND you will have notes to work from when you do your write up.

Work Booklets and Mark Schemes:

Once you have chosen your set research piece – you should download and print off two coursework booklets. These can be found on the same website as this booklet under the link – OCR AS Level Coursework Booklet – 2005 or you could follow the link from the OCR website. You will need to work books as it is important that you have a draft copy. Writing or typing in the book will give you an idea of how much space you have and rough idea of the word limit. It is also important that you download the assessment criteria (mark scheme) as it will show you what is required of a top level work. The mark scheme can be downloaded from this website under the link – OCR AS Level Coursework Mark Scheme.

The Write Up:

OCR has very precise requirements of the research report write up. The following has been produced by OCR and highlights the different sections of the report, what is required and hints on word limits:

1. The Research Report should be **no more than 1000 words**.
2. The report should be organised in the following sections:
 - a. **The source of the research.** Candidates are required to give the title, author, publication date and publisher (if any) of their chosen piece of research.
 - b. **The research objective.** Candidates are required to state, in their own words, the objective of their chosen piece of research. *(Suggested word limit 10-30 words)*
 - c. **An outline of the research methodology.** Candidates are required to outline the methodology of their chosen piece of research. *(Suggested word limit 200-270 words)*
 - d. **Reasons for the selection of the methodology.** Candidates are required to explain why, in their opinion, the researcher adopted the methodology. *(Suggested word limit 250-300 words)*
 - e. **An outline and evaluation of the findings of the research.** Candidates should summarise the findings of the research, including a limited sample of the data produced. *(Suggested word limit 350-400 words)*

The Next section of the booklet set up to help with sections a to e – they are there as guidelines only.

Section A: Information

You need to provide the following information about the research on which your Research Report is based:

The examiner has noted that this section must be accurate – don't lie about reading a book if you have only read the article (the examiner will know!!)

Title of research:

Author of research:

Publisher:

Date of Publication:

Section B: Outline of the Research Design

210 - 300 words: Try keep as close as you can to the word limit.

*“You should state the objective of your chosen piece of research, and use this section to outline how the researcher/s carried out their research. You should describe their aims of the research and the research methods they used. (You may wish to consider methods, sample size, access to sample, etc.)”.*OCR booklet

In this section you should describe the study- to guide you through this use the boxes below – some of them may not be relevant to your chosen research, in which case do not use them. You may wish to add in your own!

Hypothesis: Identify the concepts the researcher needed to measure / test

Aims – what did the researcher state as the key aims, usually best to number them in a list.

Methodology- what was adopted by the researcher? e.g.: positivist / realist / feminist?

Did they use a model of scientific enquiry e.g. Popper’s Hypothetico-Deductive model?

Operationalisation of concepts – did the research have to define / measure any concepts

Method(s)-

What method(s) did the research use?- briefly comment on things like whether primary / secondary method(s) used, type of data (quantitative / qualitative) collected. Don't forget to mention practical issues like time etc

Give more details about the method(s) used? e.g. did the questionnaire have open or closed questions or both.

Sample Technique and frame- give brief details of sample technique used and controlled variables (e.g. Stratified random: stratified by age and gender), how did they gain access to population? who was their gatekeeper?

Sample Size- how many was in the sample population?

Legal / Ethical / Safety considerations – this is important especially the ethic issue.

Section C: Reasons for selection of Research Design

250 - 300 words: Try keep as close as you can to the word limit.

“Use this section to outline the reasons why the researcher/s chose the methodology outlined in the first section. You should explain why the methodology was thought to be suitable for achieving the kind of data required by the researcher”. OCR

In this section you explain why the researcher has conducted the study in a certain manner. The questions below are set out to guide you through this section – some of them may not be relevant to your chosen research, in which case do not use them. Also note that these are just a guide line – you may wish to add more points. The examiner has stated that you must contextualise your answer – so you must link your answer directly to the research you are using. Make sure you link to the 4 key issues – representation, generalisation, reliability and validity.

Methods:

Why did the researcher(s) chose the method(s) you identified in the “Outline of the Research Design” section?- What were the strengths of the method used – how did they link with this aims/hypothesis – try to contextualise e.g. “study of youths” – “he used overt participant observation because it allowed him greater insight into the attitudes of the youths he was studying.”

Was the method used appropriate in terms of the research aims and data required? – you could outline why they didn’t use other research techniques e.g. “the researcher used overt participant observation and not covert observation as.....” (don’t over do this)

How did his methods ensure validity and reliability? – an important section

Data:

What type of information did the researcher aim to collect (quantitative / qualitative / mixture of both?)

Why did the researcher collect the type of information identified in? – again you must contextualise this part e.g. when studying reasons for domestic abuse why is it more appropriate to have qualitative data than quantitative data

Operationalisation – where the terms used appropriate

Was the sample type and size appropriate to the research hypothesis /aims?

Did the sample type / size allow the researcher to reliably and validly test their hypothesis / aims?

Legal / Ethical / Safety considerations -Briefly explain how you think these were / addressed appropriately

Section D: Evaluation of Research Findings

350 – 400 words: Try keep as close as you can to the word limit.

*“You should use this section to outline briefly the main findings of the study, making reference to a limited sample of the research data to illustrate particular points. (The sample may be attached to the Report as an appendix and may take the form of a graph, table, text quotations, etc. It will not be included in the word count). You should also **identify** the parts of the research that appear to have **worked well** and those that **have not**. You will need to show that you are **aware of ways in which the methods selected have affected the quality of the data collected and produced**, using the concepts of reliability, validity, representativeness and / or generalisability”.* OCR

The questions below are set out to guide you through this section – some of them may not be relevant to your chosen research, in which case do not use them. Also note that these are just a guide line – you may wish to add more points. The examiner noted that the main findings section should be no more than 100 words. It was also suggested that you link the project findings back to the aims.

What were the main findings of the research? – Identify / summarise main findings. Make reference to examples from the research (quotes, tables etc can be placed in the appendix and will not be included in the word count.)

There are two ways of completing the next part of this section you can do this....

Were the conclusions presented in the research reliable / valid? Explain your answer- you could link this to the operationalisation of concepts e.g. did the researcher fully operationalise (measure or test) the concepts. If not, how did this impact on the reliability / validity of the research findings?

What aspects of the research worked successfully? (sample? methods? questions? ethical issues? time? to name a few - relate back to reliable, valid, representation and generalisation)

What aspects of the research were not successful? (sample? methods? questions? ethical issues? time? to name a few - relate back to reliable, valid, representation and generalization)

General summary: Briefly explain the overall strengths and / or weaknesses of the research, were the hypothesis / research aim realistic and achievable, did the research achieve its aims

or this...

Were the conclusions presented in the research reliable / valid? Explain your answer- you could link this to the operationalisation of concepts e.g. did the researcher fully operationalise (measure or test) the concepts. If not, how did this impact on the reliability / validity of the research findings?

Sample – what worked well?

Sample – what didn't work well?

Methods – what worked well?

Methods – what didn't work well?

Any ethical issues?

Any practical issues?

General summary: Briefly explain the overall strengths and / or weaknesses of the research, were the hypothesis / research aim realistic and achievable, did the research achieve its aims

Summary: Final Thoughts

This section is here to remind you of the importance of working hard on your coursework. As a department we are aware of the pressure of the AS course and we will support you in every way we can. HOWEVER, you must put in the work!!!

This booklet is here to **guide** you – it can't do the work for you and remember if you want to stand out in the crowd you will need to put your individualised your work – so please don't feel you have to the questions in the booklet – they are purely there to guide you.

Remember the Research Report is 30% of the AS GCE and 15% of the full Advanced GCE.

So make it count!!!

If you need any further guidance please find any member of the Sociology department.

Good Luck.