8.2 Work and Welfare: Changing Work, Worklessness and Welfare Policy

AQA 7192 · about 60 minutes · Write-in edition

Total Marks

Name: _____ Date: ____ / ____ / _____

Answer ALL questions. For questions marked AO2 or AO3 use short, linked sentences; for the final question write in full sentences. Allow about 60 minutes for the whole pack.

1 Using Item A and your knowledge, explain two sociological criticisms of relying mainly on retraining courses to solve local long-term unemployment.

(Total for Question 1 is 4 marks)

2 Outline one ethical issue policymakers must consider when increasing benefit conditionality, such as stricter job search requirements.

(Total for Question 2 is 2 marks)

3 Describe two features of Universal Credit as a UK welfare reform.

(Total for Question 3 is 4 marks)

4 Compare a welfare pluralist view and a residual view of how welfare should be provided in society.

(Total for Question 4 is 4 marks)

5 Explain two reasons why some sociologists argue that Universal Credit may increase insecurity for low-paid workers.

(Total for Question 5 is 4 marks)

6 Using your knowledge of sociological perspectives, evaluate the extent to which welfare-to-work policies, such as conditionality, training and wage subsidies, are the most effective response to long-term worklessness.

(Total for Question 6 is 12 marks)

7 Define what sociologists mean by 'reskilling' in the context of changes to work under globalisation and technological change.

(Total for Question 7 is 2 marks)

8 Describe one feature of the 'gig economy' as it affects people's working lives in the UK.

(Total for Question 8 is 3 marks)

9 Identify and explain two sociological reasons why some individuals become long-term unemployed.

(Total for Question 9 is 4 marks)

10 Define the Beveridge model of the welfare state as it is used in discussions of UK welfare provision.

(Total for Question 10 is 2 marks)

11 Describe one practical problem the government faces when trying to help long-term unemployed people find work.

(Total for Question 11 is 3 marks)

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12 Item A: A small town has lost a manufacturing plant, leaving 800 workers redundant. Local vacancies are mainly in part-time service jobs and gig work with no guaranteed hours. The local jobcentre reports many former plant workers lack digital skills and formal qualifications. The UK government offers a package of retraining courses, stricter benefit conditionality requiring job search evidence, and top-up wage subsidies for part-time hires.

(a) Using Item A, identify two barriers the former plant workers face when trying to take local jobs. **(2)**

(b) Using Item A, explain one way the government's wage subsidy offer might help these workers. **(2)**

(Total for Question 12 is 4 marks)

Mark scheme · 8.2 Work and Welfare: Changing Work, Worklessness and Welfare Policy

Question 1

identifies one criticism, e.g. retraining alone does not improve the security of available jobs	**B1**
explains using Item A, e.g. courses could address the stated digital-skill and qualification gaps, but cannot by themselves turn mainly part-time service and gig vacancies with no guaranteed hours into secure employment	**B1**
identifies a second criticism, e.g. practical barriers such as transport or childcare difficulties can prevent access to work even after retraining	**B1**
explains with development, e.g. if workers cannot travel to jobs or arrange childcare, gaining relevant skills will not enable them to take those jobs without additional support	**B1**

Answer: One criticism is that retraining alone does not improve job security. Item A reports gaps in digital skills and formal qualifications, so courses could help, but they cannot by themselves turn mainly part-time service and gig vacancies with no guaranteed hours into secure employment. A second criticism is that practical barriers can prevent access to work even after retraining. For example, if workers cannot travel to jobs or arrange childcare, gaining relevant skills will not enable them to take those jobs without additional support. These possible barriers come from sociological knowledge rather than being stated in Item A.

Question 2

identifies an ethical issue, e.g. risk of punishing vulnerable people who cannot meet conditions due to illness or caring responsibilities	**B1**
development, e.g. sanctions could push people into poverty or harm wellbeing if safeguards are inadequate	**B1**

Answer: An ethical issue is the risk of punishing vulnerable claimants who cannot meet conditions because of illness or caring duties; sanctions could push these people into poverty or harm their wellbeing if safeguards are insufficient.

Question 3

identifies a feature, e.g. Universal Credit combines several means-tested benefits into one monthly payment	**B1**
development, e.g. it merges jobseeker's allowance, housing benefit and tax credits among others	**B1**
identifies a second feature, e.g. has stronger conditionality and an emphasis on moving claimants into work	**B1**
development, e.g. claimants must show job search activity and can face sanctions if they do not	**B1**

Answer: Universal Credit combines several means-tested benefits into one monthly payment, merging payments such as jobseeker's allowance and housing benefit, and emphasises stronger conditionality by requiring claimants to show job search activity and potentially face sanctions.

Question 4

identifies pluralism as support for mixed provision from state, market and voluntary sectors	**B1**
explains pluralist idea that diversity allows choice and fills gaps state provision may not cover	**B1**
identifies residualism as favouring minimal state role and support only as a last resort	**B1**
explains residualists argue extensive universal welfare can reduce personal responsibility and be unaffordable	**B1**

Answer: Pluralists support mixed welfare provision from state, market and voluntary sectors, arguing diversity gives choice and fills gaps, while residualists favour a minimal state role providing support only as a last resort, arguing that universal provision can reduce personal responsibility and be unaffordable.

Question 5

identifies reason one, e.g. monthly payment timing can be problematic for people used to weekly wages	**B1**
explains development, e.g. large monthly payments followed by delays or advances can cause budgeting difficulties and risk of rent arrears	**B1**
identifies reason two, e.g. strict conditionality and sanctions can reduce income security when employment is unpredictable	**B1**
explains development, e.g. low-paid or gig work with variable hours can make meeting conditions hard, risking sanctions and loss of income	**B1**

Answer: Monthly payment timing can cause budgeting problems for workers used to weekly pay, risking rent arrears, and strict conditionality with sanctions can reduce income security for those in unstable or variable-hour work who may struggle to meet requirements.

Question 6

Level 1 Simple, limited points about welfare-to-work policies, with little development. May describe a single policy without linking to sociological perspectives or provide unsupported assertion about effectiveness. **1-3**

Level 2 Some relevant knowledge and application. Describes welfare-to-work policies and gives basic reasons why they might help, with limited use of sociological perspectives or evidence. Some attempt at evaluation, but unbalanced. **4-6**

Level 3 Clear knowledge and application. Explains how welfare-to-work policies can reduce worklessness using sociological ideas such as human capital and behaviourist approaches, and offers criticisms from structural and feminist perspectives. Some balanced assessment and examples. **7-9**

Level 4 Comprehensive, well-developed response with effective evaluation. Uses competing sociological perspectives, for example New Right support for conditionality, social democratic or structural critiques that stress job creation and local investment, and feminist concerns about care responsibilities. Reaches a supported conclusion on how far welfare-to-work policies alone are sufficient. **10-12**

Indicative content:

- Points that support welfare-to-work policies: conditionality can motivate active job search; training increases skills and employability; wage subsidies reduce employer risk and create opportunities; policymakers can target support to local needs.
- New Right perspective: supports conditionality and work incentives, arguing benefits should encourage work and reduce dependency.
- Human capital perspective: emphasises reskilling and training to match employer needs, improving long-term prospects.
- Structural criticisms: decline in local job opportunities, automation and lack of investment mean training alone cannot create jobs; need for demand-side policies and regional investment.
- Feminist critique: welfare-to-work can punish carers if childcare and caring responsibilities are not addressed; conditionality may unfairly sanction those with caring duties.
- Practical and ethical issues: sanctions can increase hardship, digital access and budgeting challenges under Universal Credit may limit policy effectiveness.
- Evidence from Item-like contexts: where vacancies are low or insecure (gig work), wage subsidies and retraining may have limited effect unless job quality and availability improve.
- Conclusion should weigh perspectives, recognising welfare-to-work can be part of a solution but is unlikely to be sufficient on its own without job creation, supportive services and safeguards.

Question 7

identifies reskilling as workers learning new skills to adapt to changes in technology or job requirements (oe) **B1**

development, e.g. retraining to use new software or to move from manual tasks to more technical tasks **B1**

Answer: Reskilling is workers learning new skills to adapt to changes in technology or job requirements, for example retraining to use new software or to move from manual tasks to more technical roles.

Question 8

identifies a feature, e.g. short-term, task-based work accessed through digital platforms **B1**

development, e.g. workers may have flexible hours and choose tasks through an app **B1**

further development, e.g. often limited employment rights such as sick pay or guaranteed hours **B1**

Answer: The gig economy involves short-term, task-based work accessed through digital platforms; workers often have flexible hours and choose tasks via apps, but typically have limited employment rights like no sick pay or guaranteed hours.

Question 9

identifies one reason, e.g. structural economic change reducing demand for certain jobs **B1**

explains how the decline of industries like manufacturing leads to job losses and localised unemployment **B1**

identifies a second reason, e.g. individual-level barriers such as lack of skills or qualifications **B1**

explains how lacking relevant skills makes it harder for someone to find new work, prolonging unemployment **B1**

Answer: Structural economic change can reduce demand for certain jobs, for example decline in local manufacturing causes job losses and local unemployment; individual barriers like lack of skills or qualifications make it harder to find new roles, prolonging unemployment.

Question 10

identifies Beveridge as advocating a universal welfare state providing benefits to prevent the 'five giants' of want, disease, ignorance, squalor and idleness **B1**

development, e.g. universal provision paid from taxation designed to support citizens across the life course **B1**

Answer: The Beveridge model advocates a universal welfare state providing benefits to prevent the 'five giants' (want, disease, ignorance, squalor and idleness), with universal provision paid from taxation to support citizens across the life course.

Question 11

identifies a problem, e.g. matching training to local job vacancies **B1**

development, e.g. training may not fit the types of jobs available, leaving people trained for skills employers do not need **B1**

further point, e.g. transport or childcare barriers can prevent people from taking jobs even if vacancies exist **B1**

Answer: A practical problem is matching training to local job vacancies: training may not fit local employer needs, and factors like transport or childcare can prevent people taking available jobs even when they have new skills.

Question 12

(a) a correct barrier, e.g. lack of digital skills **B1**

(a) a second correct barrier, e.g. local vacancies are mainly part-time or gig work with no guaranteed hours **B1**

(a) Answer: Lack of digital skills, and that local vacancies are mainly part-time or gig jobs with no guaranteed hours.

(b) identifies how a wage subsidy could make employers more willing to hire **B1**

(b) explains development, e.g. reducing employers' costs could lead to more part-time hires and quicker re-employment for redundant workers **B1**

(b) Answer: A wage subsidy could make employers more willing to hire by reducing their costs, which may increase part-time offers and help redundant workers regain employment more quickly.