



GSOC.CR1 Formal and Informal Social Control

AQA 8192 · Calculators not allowed · about 75 minutes

Total Marks

Name: _____ Date: ____ / ____ / ____

Answer ALL questions. Use sociological vocabulary and give clear examples where asked.

1 Which of these is an example of formal social control?

- ☐ A) A parent grounding a child
- ☐ B) A court issuing a fine
- ☐ C) A friend disapproving of a lie
- ☐ D) A teacher giving a disappointed look

(Total for Question 1 is 1 mark)

2 Sociologists distinguish 'deviance' from ordinary rule-following behaviour.

(Total for Question 2 is 2 marks)

3 Deviance and crime are related but different ideas.

- (a)** State one example of behaviour that most people in the UK would see as deviant (2)
but that is not against the law.

- (b)** Explain why sociologists describe deviance as 'relative' rather than fixed. (2)

(Total for Question 3 is 4 marks)

4 Sociologists are careful to distinguish crime from the wider concept of deviance.

(Total for Question 4 is 4 marks)

5 Social control keeps most members of society conforming to shared norms and values most of the time.

(Total for Question 5 is 4 marks)

6 Most conformity in everyday life is not the result of the law at all.

(Total for Question 6 is 4 marks)

7 State two agencies that make up the formal criminal justice system, other than the police.

(Total for Question 7 is 2 marks)

8 Some sociologists argue that informal social control is often more effective, day-to-day, than formal social control.

Explain why this argument might be made.

(Total for Question 8 is 4 marks)

9 State one agency of informal social control other than the family.

(Total for Question 9 is 2 marks)

10 Which of the following would sociologists usually describe as an agent of informal, rather than formal, social control?

- ☐ A) The police
- ☐ B) A school's peer group
- ☐ C) The Crown Prosecution Service
- ☐ D) A prison

(Total for Question 10 is 1 mark)

11 A group of college students decide, without any law requiring it, that they will not invite a classmate to social events after he was rude to a member of staff.

Explain how sociological ideas about informal social control help explain this scenario.

(Total for Question 11 is 6 marks)

12 Formal and informal agencies both use sanctions to encourage conformity.

(a) State one formal sanction a court could use for a criminal offence. (2)

(b) State one informal sanction a community might use for deviant, non-criminal behaviour. (2)

(Total for Question 12 is 4 marks)

13 Sociologists disagree about which matters more in preventing crime and deviance: formal social control (the criminal justice system) or informal social control (family, peers, community and other everyday groups).

Evaluate the view that informal methods of social control are more important than formal methods in preventing crime and deviance in society. In your answer you should consider more than one point of view.

(Total for Question 13 is 12 marks)

14 Sanctions are the tools social control relies on.

(Total for Question 14 is 2 marks)

15 Norms are the everyday building blocks of social order.

(Total for Question 15 is 2 marks)

16 Explain one reason why what counts as deviant behaviour can change over time.

(Total for Question 16 is 2 marks)

Mark scheme · GSOC.CR1 Formal and Informal Social Control

Question 1

- **B1** B (a court issuing a fine)
- **Answer: B**

Question 2

- **B1** behaviour that goes against the shared norms and values of a social group, and is likely to be disapproved of or sanctioned (oe)
- **B1** development, e.g. distinct from legal crime, since deviance is judged by social groups and does not have to break a law
- **Answer: Behaviour that goes against the shared norms and values of a social group and is likely to be disapproved of; unlike crime, deviance does not have to break a law to be judged this way.**

Question 3

- (a) **B1** a genuine example, e.g. being extremely rude to an elderly relative at a family gathering, or wearing clothing widely seen as highly inappropriate at a formal occasion such as a funeral
- (a) **B1** brief accurate explanation of why it counts as deviant (breaks a shared social norm or expectation) without breaking any law
- (a) **Answer: Being extremely rude to an elderly relative at a family gathering: this breaks a shared social norm of respect, so it is deviant, but it breaks no law, so it is not criminal.**
- (b) **B1** identifies that what counts as deviant is not fixed but varies between different times, places, cultures or social groups (oe)
- (b) **B1** a correct example, e.g. an act widely disapproved of in one era or culture may be considered acceptable in another
- (b) **Answer: Deviance is relative because what counts as deviant varies between different times, places, cultures and social groups, rather than being fixed; an act disapproved of in one era or culture may be accepted in another.**

Question 4

- **B1** identifies deviance as behaviour that breaks the shared norms and values of a social group
- **B1** identifies crime as a narrower category: behaviour that specifically breaks a written law of the state
- **B1** explains that all crime is therefore also deviant, but not all deviance is criminal
- **B1** development, e.g. crime is legally defined and enforced by the state, while deviance is socially defined and can be judged by any social group
- **Answer: Deviance is behaviour that breaks a social group's shared norms and values; crime is the narrower category of behaviour that breaks a written law of the state. All crime is therefore deviant, but not all deviance is criminal.**

Question 5

- **B1** identifies formal social control as control carried out by official agencies with recognised legal power
- **B1** names at least one such agency, e.g. the police, courts or prison service
- **B1** gives a correct example, e.g. a court can fine or imprison a person found guilty of an offence
- **B1** development, e.g. formal social control operates mainly through the criminal justice system and applies chiefly to behaviour that breaks the law
- **Answer: Formal social control is control carried out by official agencies, such as the police, courts and prisons, that have recognised legal power to impose specific written sanctions; for example, a court can fine or imprison someone found guilty of an offence.**

Question 6

- **B1** identifies informal social control as control exercised through unwritten social pressure and approval or disapproval
- **B1** names at least one agency, e.g. family, peers, religious groups, the community or the workplace
- **B1** gives a correct example, e.g. a group of friends excluding someone who they feel has behaved badly
- **B1** development, e.g. it does not rely on official legal power and often shapes behaviour before any law is broken
- **Answer: Informal social control is control exercised through unwritten social pressure and approval or disapproval from groups such as family, peers or the community, without legal power; for example, a group of friends might exclude someone who they feel has behaved badly.**

Question 7

- **B1** one correct agency, e.g. the courts
- **B1** a second, different correct agency, e.g. the prison or probation service
- **Answer: The courts, and the prison or probation service.**

Question 8

- **B1** identifies that informal control operates continuously in everyday life, before any law is broken
- **B1** development, e.g. fear of a family's, friends' or community's disapproval can stop rule-breaking that the police would never see or become involved in
- **B1** further point, e.g. formal control usually only reacts after a crime has been reported or discovered, so its reach depends on detection
- **B1** development, e.g. informal control's constant, everyday presence gives it a wider preventive reach in ordinary situations than a criminal justice system most people rarely encounter
- **Answer: Informal control operates continuously in everyday life, so fear of disapproval from family, friends or the community can prevent rule-breaking the police never see, whereas formal control usually only reacts once a crime has already been reported or discovered.**

Question 9

- **B1** names a genuine agency, e.g. the peer group, a religious organisation, the workplace or the media
- **B1** brief accurate description of how it exercises control
- **Answer: The peer group: friends can informally encourage or discourage behaviour through approval or disapproval, without any legal power.**

Question 10

- **B1** B (a school's peer group)
- **Answer: B**

Question 11

- **B1** identifies the classmate's exclusion from social events as an informal sanction
- **B1** explains that group approval or disapproval can shape behaviour without any law being involved
- **B1** explains the possible deterrent effect: fear of exclusion might discourage the student, or others watching, from behaving the same way again
- **B1** notes that no formal agency, such as the police or courts, is involved in this scenario
- **B1** correctly identifies the peer group or college friendship group as the specific agency of informal control at work
- **B1** clear, accurate use of social control terminology throughout (e.g. informal social control, sanction)
- **Answer: The students' decision not to invite their classmate to social events is an informal sanction imposed by the peer group; it shows how disapproval, rather than any law or official agency, can discourage rule-breaking through fear of social exclusion, illustrating informal social control in action.**

Question 12

- (a) **B1** names a genuine sanction, e.g. a fine, a prison sentence or a community order
- (a) **B1** brief accurate description
- (a) **Answer: A fine: the court orders the offender to pay a set sum of money as a punishment.**
- (b) **B1** names a genuine informal sanction, e.g. gossip, social exclusion or disapproving looks
- (b) **B1** brief accurate description
- (b) **Answer: Gossip or disapproval: members of a community might talk about or openly disapprove of someone's behaviour, without any legal penalty.**

Question 13

- **Level 4** (10-12): A detailed, well-balanced evaluation that accurately explains BOTH the case for informal control AND the case for formal control, supported by accurate examples and sociological terminology. Strengths and weaknesses of each view are analysed, and a reasoned, supported judgement is reached.
- **Level 3** (7-9): A clear evaluation that explains both the case for informal control and the case for formal control, with accurate examples. Some analysis of strengths/weaknesses. An attempt at a conclusion, which may be only partly supported.
- **Level 2** (4-6): Some relevant explanation of informal and/or formal control, with limited development or accuracy. Little clear evaluation or comparison between the two.
- **Level 1** (1-3): One or two isolated, undeveloped points about informal or formal control, with little or no sociological terminology or accurate detail.
- **Level 0** (0): No relevant content.
- **Indicative content:**
 - Case for informal control: it operates continuously in everyday settings (family, peers, community, workplace) and can prevent deviant or criminal behaviour before it happens, through fear of disapproval or exclusion.
 - Case for informal control continued: socialisation into shared norms and values, largely carried out informally through the family and peer group, means most people conform most of the time without ever encountering the criminal justice system.
 - Case for formal control: it provides a visible, consistent deterrent backed by the power of the state, applying specific written sanctions (fines, prison) that informal groups cannot impose.
 - Case for formal control continued: formal control is especially important for serious crimes, and for situations where informal ties are weak or absent, such as between strangers in public.
 - Evaluation of the case for informal control: its effectiveness may depend heavily on how strong an individual's social ties are; someone with weak family or community ties may be much less affected by informal disapproval.
 - Evaluation of the case for formal control: it usually only responds after a crime is reported or discovered, so it depends on detection, and its deterrent effect on already-determined offenders can be limited.
 - A balanced conclusion should weigh the wide, everyday preventive reach of informal control against the seriousness and consistency of the sanctions only formal control can apply, without claiming either removes the need for the other.

Question 14

- **B1** a reward or punishment used to encourage conformity to a norm or value (oe)
- **B1** development, e.g. sanctions can be positive (praise, reward) or negative (punishment, disapproval)
- **Answer: A reward or punishment used to encourage conformity to a norm or value; sanctions can be positive (e.g. praise) or negative (e.g. punishment or disapproval).**

Question 15

- **B1** a specific, generally accepted standard of behaviour within a particular social group or situation (oe)
- **B1** a correct example, e.g. queuing in an orderly line at a bus stop
- **Answer: A specific, generally accepted standard of behaviour within a particular social group or situation; for example, queuing in an orderly line at a bus stop.**

Question 16

- **B1** identifies that social attitudes and norms themselves can change over time
- **B1** a correct example, e.g. openly discussing mental health in the UK was once unusual but is now much more widely accepted
- **Answer: Social attitudes and norms change over time; for example, openly discussing mental health in the UK was once unusual but is now widely accepted, showing how the boundary of what counts as deviant can shift.**