6.5 Social Mobility: 30-minute Pack

AQA 8192 · about 30 minutes

Total Marks

Name: _____ Date: ____ / ____ / _____

Answer ALL questions. Show your understanding by using sociological vocabulary and, where asked, your own examples.

1 Explain two reasons some sociologists are cautious about describing the UK as a highly meritocratic society.

(Total for Question 1 is 4 marks)

2 State one strength of Peter Saunders' argument that Britain is reasonably meritocratic.

(Total for Question 2 is 2 marks)

3 Explain two ways government policy could try to increase social mobility.

(Total for Question 3 is 4 marks)

© Revision Library | revisionlibrary.co.uk

4 Michael Young's 1958 book on meritocracy is often misunderstood today.

(a) Explain how the term 'meritocracy' was originally intended as a warning rather than a straightforward ideal. **(2)**

(b) Explain one way this original warning differs from how the word 'meritocracy' is often used today. **(2)**

(c) State one strength of aiming for a more meritocratic society, despite Young's original warning. **(2)**

(Total for Question 4 is 6 marks)

---

5 Define the term 'social mobility'.

(Total for Question 5 is 2 marks)

---

6 Explain the difference between absolute and relative social mobility.

(Total for Question 6 is 4 marks)

---

7 State one factor sociologists say can affect a person's chances of upward social mobility.

(Total for Question 7 is 2 marks)

© Revision Library | revisionlibrary.co.uk

Mark scheme · 6.5 Social Mobility: 30-minute Pack

Question 1

identifies one reason, e.g. relative mobility research, such as Goldthorpe's, suggests people from advantaged backgrounds remain considerably more likely to reach top class positions than people from disadvantaged backgrounds, even when absolute mobility has risen **B1**

development **B1**

identifies a second, different reason, e.g. access to resources that support success, such as private tutoring, unpaid internships or professional networks, is unevenly distributed by family background, which can undermine a purely merit-based system **B1**

development **B1**

Answer: Goldthorpe's relative mobility research shows advantaged backgrounds remain more likely to reach top positions; also, resources such as tutoring, internships and networks are unevenly distributed, undermining a purely merit-based system.

Question 2

identifies a genuine strength, e.g. it draws on long-term evidence following individuals over time, and highlights that ability and effort do play some genuine part in mobility outcomes, not only family background **B1**

brief development **B1**

Answer: Saunders' argument draws on long-term evidence and highlights that ability and effort do play some genuine part in mobility outcomes, not only family background.

Question 3

identifies one policy, e.g. expanding access to higher education through student finance, so that cost is less of a barrier **B1**

development **B1**

identifies a second, different policy, e.g. funding apprenticeships or careers guidance that opens up new career routes, such as the one Isla takes up in Item A **B1**

development **B1**

Answer: Expanding access to higher education through student finance can reduce cost as a barrier; funding apprenticeships or careers guidance can open up new career routes, such as the one Isla takes up in Item A.

Question 4

(a) identifies that Michael Young coined the term in his 1958 book as part of a satirical, fictional account of a future society **B1**

(a) development, e.g. Young's book warned that a fully merit-based system could create a new, potentially harsh, form of inequality between a confident 'meritocratic' elite and those left behind, rather than simply celebrating fairness **B1**

(a) Answer: Michael Young coined 'meritocracy' in a 1958 satirical, fictional book warning that a fully merit-based system could create a new, harsh form of inequality between a confident elite and those left behind.

(b) identifies that the term is now often used positively, to describe a fair system based on ability and effort, rather than as a warning **B1**

(b) development, e.g. this shift means some of Young's original concerns about the downsides of a strict meritocracy can be lost in everyday use of the word **B1**

(b) Answer: The term is now often used positively, to describe a fair system based on ability and effort, so some of Young's original concerns about its downsides can be lost in everyday use.

(c) identifies a genuine strength, e.g. a system that rewards ability and effort rather than only background can open up opportunities to talented people regardless of where they start from **B1**

(c) brief development **B1**

(c) Answer: A system that rewards ability and effort rather than only background can open up opportunities to talented people regardless of where they start from.

Question 5

identifies social mobility as the movement of individuals or groups between different positions in the class/status structure (oe) **B1**

development, e.g. this can be upward, moving to a higher class position, or downward, moving to a lower one **B1**

Answer: Social mobility is the movement of individuals or groups between different positions in the class structure, which can be upward or downward.

© Revision Library | revisionlibrary.co.uk

Question 6

identifies absolute mobility as the total amount of movement between class positions in a society, which can rise simply because the shape of the job market changes (oe)	**B1**
development, e.g. if there are more professional/managerial jobs available than in the past, more people can move upward in absolute terms	**B1**
identifies relative mobility as comparing the chances of people from different class backgrounds reaching a particular class position, relative to each other	**B1**
development, e.g. relative mobility can stay unequal even while absolute mobility rises, if people from advantaged backgrounds are still more likely to reach top positions than people from disadvantaged backgrounds	**B1**

Answer: Absolute mobility is the total amount of movement between class positions, which can rise as the job market changes; relative mobility compares the chances of people from different backgrounds, which can stay unequal even as absolute mobility rises.

Question 7

identifies a genuine factor, e.g. educational qualifications, or changes in the structure of the job market creating more or fewer higher-status jobs	**B1**
brief development	**B1**

Answer: Educational qualifications, or changes in the structure of the job market creating more or fewer higher-status jobs, can affect a person's chances of upward mobility.

© Revision Library | revisionlibrary.co.uk