

Commentary on candidate evidence

The candidate evidence has achieved the following marks for each section of the assignment.

Candidate 1

Section A – Research topic/issue

The candidate has clearly identified an appropriate Modern Studies topic which relates to social issues – crime and the law. The candidate also uses this section to state a hypothesis and three clear aims for their research.

Section B – Research methods

The candidate begins by referring to their first method of research - a questionnaire. This is the 'Source 1 – Questionnaire' shown on the research sheet.

They state that one advantage of this method is that it 'allowed me to ask questions tailored to my aims so I could gather relevant information'. This was awarded **1 mark**.

The candidate states that the use of 'close-ended questions' allowed them to gather data from which they could make comparisons and clear decisions on topics. This was awarded **1 mark**.

The candidate then refers to question 3 and states that 'These questions allowed me to gather more information on peoples opinions on the topic.' This was awarded **1 mark**.

The candidate gives another advantage and state that it was anonymous which means people are likely to give their true opinion as there is no identification and that people can be honest as there is no fear of judgement which increases the reliability of the results. This was awarded **2 marks**.

The candidate then gives a disadvantage of their method and state that most people may not be well educated on the topic which negatively impacts the quality of results. This was awarded **1 mark**.

Another disadvantage is provided – ‘I did not ask a large and diverse amount of people, this limiting the range of viewpoints on the topic meaning my results were not representative to the country.’ This was awarded **1 mark**.

A third disadvantage is given about the respondents being female and aged below 18 who all have similar views. This was awarded **1 mark**.

The candidate then gives an improvement to their survey by saying that they would post their survey on social media platforms to reach a broader spread of people from different backgrounds and ethnicities ensuring that the results represent the views of the country. This was awarded **1 mark**.

The candidate then goes on to discuss another method of research – the BBC website. They give an advantage of the BBC and state that it is a well-known, highly trusted mainstream site from which professional writer’s post articles, this ensures accuracy as the information will all be honest and informative. This was awarded **1 mark**.

They then go on to say that it is checked editorially and technically which improves reliability. This was awarded **1 mark**.

Another advantage is given when the candidate states that it is not a very biased website, they have to be objective and have no political agenda, so it leads to ‘an even playing field’. This was awarded **1 mark**.

Their next point about the BBC being about educating and informing, rather than persuading, means that they get a broad range of data to make clear comparisons of the good and bad. This was awarded **2 marks**.

The candidate then gives a disadvantage of their method by referring to their BBC article which was posted more than a year ago which negatively affects the accuracy of their results because the prison system is constantly changing and evolving, and recent information is crucial. This was awarded **1 mark**.

Another disadvantage is given about how the article only discusses one prison in England and is not representative. This was awarded **1 mark**.

The candidate then gives a suggestion to improve accuracy that being to use the HMI inspectorate annual report which they say would allow them to make comments about UK prisons as a whole. This was awarded **1 mark**.

Section C – Research findings

The candidate clearly separates their findings into three paragraphs - one for each of their aims.

Paragraph 1 relates to Aim 1 – ‘To find out about drug use in UK prisons.’

They give a finding about 41% of men in category B prisons testing positive for drug use. This was awarded **1 mark**. The next sentence states that ‘This conveys the large amount of people who use drugs in UK prisons but also how easy it is to take them, this is due to the lack of tight security.’ This was awarded **1 mark** and could also be considered a conclusion.

The candidate states a finding from Source 4 which found that many prisoners gain addictions to drugs within prisons as they are more accessible which can lead to overdosing. This was awarded **1 mark**.

Paragraph 2 relates to Aim 2 – ‘To find out the impacts of overcrowding in UK prisons.’

The candidate gives evidence from their survey findings about the impact of overcrowding in prisons and refer to ‘lack of spaces in programmes which help with mental health issues’. This was awarded **1 mark**.

They state that there is a ‘chain reaction to overcrowding in UK prisons’. This was awarded **1 mark** and could also be considered a conclusion.

Their explanation about the impact of being locked up in a cell for ‘longer hours’ was awarded **1 mark**.

No marks were awarded for their statement 'this shows how drug use and mental health is exacerbated by overcrowding' because this was considered a repetition of their explanation.

The candidate is awarded **1 mark** for stating that 'the lows of drugs can heavily affect someone's mental state and can cause serious issues such as depression and anxiety, if they do not receive professional help...'.

Paragraph 3 relates to Aim 3 – 'To find out if UK prisons negatively affect prisoners mental health.'

The candidate states that 'many prisoners who enter prison with pre-existing mental health illnesses struggle to receive help and support within prison, this is due to insufficient therapy and low number of spaces for programmes and mental health nurses'. This was awarded **1 mark**.

The next line is about the impact on prisoners and the candidate states 'This means that they will not have help and will continue to face their struggles alone, this can put prisoners in a very dark place making them feel even more alone, this can lead to very severe consequences.' This was awarded **1 mark** and could also be considered a conclusion.

Supporting evidence is given from Source 3 – '16 in 10,000 prisoners commit suicide in the UK, this is the largest rate in Europe'. This was awarded **1 mark**.

The candidate states 'This clearly shows how not enough is being done to help these prisoners.' This was awarded **1 mark** and could also be a conclusion.

A further **1 mark** was awarded for their statement 'many prisoners who received medication prescribed by a GP outside of prison were denied it within' and the last line about how someone's mental state can be affected by this was also awarded **1 mark**.

The candidate has accumulated a total of 13 marks in this section – there are 9 findings and 4 potential conclusions.

Section D – Research conclusions

The conclusion section has a number of valid conclusions and also makes recommendations which avoids repetition. Although the candidate has gathered sufficient marks from Section C to allow for 4/4 marks in Section D, it should still be marked.

The candidate concludes that ‘drugs have a very severe and known presence within UK prisons’ and this can be awarded **1 mark**.

The candidate makes a valid recommendation about separating prisoners who arrive according to whether their crime was caused by drugs or if they tested positive for drugs on entry. This was awarded **1 mark**.

They state this would allow for prison officers to keep a ‘closer eye on the prisoners who are likely to smuggle drugs into prisons, therefore limiting the sale of drugs’. This is a valid recommendation, and **1 mark** can be awarded.

A further recommendation is given about harsher punishments for the sale of drugs to limit the amount of drug related crimes. This was awarded **1 mark**.

Their conclusion for the second aim is valid and their suggestion to employ more staff and build more prisons is a valid recommendation. This was awarded **1 mark**.

Their recommendation about cutting back on ‘non-custodial and low time sentences’ and giving out community pay back orders instead is valid. This was awarded **1 mark**.

Further explanation about this being a ‘more effective form of rehabilitation and would lower the prison population’ is also valid and was awarded **1 mark**.

Their conclusion for the third aim ‘prisons do heavily affect prisoners mental health and can either worsen it or create long term issues’ can be credited with **1 mark**, along with their suggestion to train more staff for mental health awareness, which can be awarded a further **1 mark**.

The last sentence regarding solving the current overcrowding issue to open more spaces in programmes and for mental health nurses meaning more people will be seen and receive help is creditable and was awarded **1 mark**.

The last paragraph states 'I believe the UK's prisons are not fit for purpose as they are not meeting the needs of all the convicts across the country. Prisoners' wellbeings are being neglected and they are not receiving the help which so many of them desperately need.' This is a valid conclusion and development of the hypothesis and was therefore awarded **1 mark**.

The last three lines were repetition of recommendations already written and therefore were awarded no further marks.

Overall, the candidate was awarded **20 out of 20 marks** for this assignment.

Candidate 2

Section A – Research topic/issue

The candidate has clearly identified an appropriate Modern Studies topic which relates to social issues – crime and the law. The candidate also uses this section to state a hypothesis and three clear aims for their research.

Section B – Research methods

The candidate begins by referring to their first method of research – a survey. This is shown on the research sheet as Source A. They state that one strength of this method is that they created all of the questions, meaning that they were relevant to their aims. This was awarded **1 mark**. The candidate then says that they used closed questions which meant that the answers were clear and direct, making them easy to analyse. This was awarded **1 mark**.

The candidate states that one weakness of the survey was that only ten people participated, and the small sample size made the information gathered less accurate. This was awarded **1 mark**. The candidate then goes on to say that the participants consisted primarily of females which gave an unbalanced viewpoint. This was awarded a further **1 mark**. The candidate finishes the paragraph with a sentence on how to improve the method however, it is unclear why they think explaining what rehabilitation is in more detail would be beneficial and therefore, no further marks were awarded.

The candidate goes on to discuss another method of research – a textbook – evidenced on the research sheet as Source B. They state that one strength is that it was written by professionals, meaning it would be factchecked to ensure the information was accurate. This was awarded **1 mark**. They then go on to say another strength is that it used simple and basic language which made it very easy to understand and this was awarded a further **1 mark**.

The candidate then suggests a weakness is that it was written in 2019. Although the research sheet states that it was published in 2021, there is a version from 2019 so this comment was accepted. They state that although it is not that outdated, the information would still be less relevant. This was awarded **1 mark**. The candidate goes on to say that a further weakness is that it did not contain all of the information needed, meaning they had to use another source. It was felt that this was very vague and poorly expressed and therefore, no marks were awarded here.

The candidate finishes by suggesting a way to improve their research – using an article from the BBC as it would have more relevant information. Again, this was felt to be very vague and poorly expressed and therefore, no further marks were awarded.

Section C – Research findings

The candidate begins by stating that they found from Source A that 7/10 people think prisons are effective. This was awarded **1 mark**.

The next paragraph states that they also found out in Source A that 6/10 people think that prison deters people from committing a crime. This was awarded **1 mark**.

The candidate then says that they found from Source A that 9/10 people think that prisons do not rehabilitate prisoners. This was awarded **1 mark**.

The candidate states that they found out from Source B that due to an increase in prisoners and a decrease in staff, many prisoners receive little or no support for addiction which was awarded **1 mark**.

In the next paragraph, the candidate says that they found rehabilitation in prisons is very difficult due to the accessibility of legal and illegal drugs within prisons. This was awarded **1 mark**.

A further **1 mark** is awarded in the next paragraph relating to assault levels in prisons being at a record level.

The candidate gives a final statistic using Source B, stating that 70% of short-term offenders are likely to reoffend. This was awarded **1 mark**.

The candidate has provided seven different findings however, the maximum mark available is six for this section.

Section D – Research conclusions

The candidate states a basic overall conclusion of ‘prisons do work’. Although the candidate says this is their hypothesis, it was felt that they reference this as a basic conclusion. This was awarded **1 mark**. They give evidence to support this however it has already been credited in their findings and therefore no marks are awarded for repetition of information.

The candidate goes on to say that they feel prisons do not deter people from committing crimes due to the majority of short-term offenders reoffending. This was awarded **1 mark**.

The candidate continues with a conclusion that prisons can rehabilitate but face many challenges making this practically impossible. This was awarded **1 mark**.

The final conclusion is that the public are divided as prison deters people from committing crime but does not stop people reoffending. Although poorly expressed, this was worth a further **1 mark**.

Overall, the candidate was awarded **17 out of 20 marks** for this assignment. This is an example of a script where you may feel there is repetition between findings and conclusions however, the candidate has managed to differentiate enough to warrant the marks awarded.

Candidate 3

Section A – Research topic/issue

The candidate has clearly identified an appropriate Modern Studies topic which relates to democracy in Scotland – ‘Should Scotland become an independent country?’ The candidate also uses this section to state a hypothesis and three clear aims for their research.

Section B – Research methods

The candidate begins by referring to their first method of research – a government report. This is the government report shown on the research sheet as Source 3. They state that one strength of this method is that it is up to date and reflected the government’s view on Scottish independence as of now. This was awarded **1 mark**. The candidate then says that another strength is ‘it had lots of detailed information regarding Scottish independence and gave the benefits of Scottish independence from every angle’. This was awarded **1 mark**.

The candidate then states a weakness of this report was ‘that it was likely bias as the government are in the ‘yes’ camp regarding Scottish independence and gave very limited information on the negatives of Scotland becoming an independent country’. This was awarded **1 mark**. The candidate then goes on to say what they think is another weakness of the report ‘that it had lots of bulky information so it was hard to filter through key words and statistics in the report’. It was felt that this was a contradiction of what the candidate had stated earlier therefore, no marks were awarded here.

The candidate then suggests what they think is an improvement if they were to do this again, ‘next time to include more headings or make the key information or statistics bolder easier to pick out’. It was felt that this was actually an improvement to the source and not the actual research method therefore, no marks were awarded here.

The candidate goes on to discuss another method of research – the statista website. This is listed as Source 1 on their research sheet. They state a strength of this website is that ‘the poll was made in September 2024 so it reflects the public’s view as of now’. Whilst the date is copied from the research sheet, a valid point is being made about it reflecting current public opinion. This was awarded **1 mark**. They go on to say that another strength of the website is ‘that it uses a clear graph to display the polls results making it easy to pick out statistics’. This was awarded **1 mark**.

The candidate then states that they think a weakness of the website is that ‘it gives no context or background information to the poll and presents solely the statistics and no explanation as to why the poll was made’. This is incorrect. On further examination of the method, there was clear information as to the context of the poll therefore, no marks were awarded here.

The candidate goes on to state that they think another weakness ‘is that it had a small sample size meaning that it does not accurately reflect Scotlands view on Scottish independence’. On checking the website, the sample size is shown as over 1,000. This is not a small sample size therefore no marks were awarded here.

The candidate then suggests that they think ‘one improvement linked to this weakness would be to try and attract a larger sample size so the poll could more accurately reflect the publics view on Scottish independence’ but this is actually a contradiction as the sample size is over 1,000 participants.

Section C – Research findings

The candidate writes their research findings in a list. The candidate states a quote from Nicola Sturgeon that ‘We’d be the 14th richest country in the developed world.’ This was awarded **1 mark**.

The candidate says that ‘An independent Scotland would be part of the worlds largest single market’. This was awarded **1 mark**.

The candidate goes onto state that ‘In the official vote for Scottish independence 55% voted no whilst 45% voted yes.’ This was awarded **1 mark**.

The candidate then says that a 'recent poll shows 56% of people voted no to Scottish independence and 44% voted yes'. This was awarded **1 mark**. The candidate goes on to state that this 'shows that the public still believe Scotland should not become an independent country'. This was awarded **1 mark** but could be given as a conclusion.

The candidate states 'The rest of the UK comprises 60% of Scotland's exports.' This was awarded **1 mark**.

The candidate goes on to say that 'The Scottish government have come to no formal agreement as to what currency an independent Scotland would use.' This was awarded **1 mark**.

The candidate then states that 'An estimated 40 million people claim Scottish ancestry worldwide.' This has no relevance to the topic therefore, no marks were awarded here.

Although, there are seven potential findings identified, there is no direct link to the research sheet and this limits the marks available for findings to 4/6.

Section D – Research conclusions

The candidate lists four bullet points for their conclusions. The first conclusion states, 'To conclude, Scotland should not become an independent country.' This was awarded **1 mark**. In the second bullet point, the candidate states 'This is because Scotland benefit from the ability to borrow money from the UK.' This was awarded **1 mark**. In the third bullet point, the candidate states 'Scotland rely on the rest of the UK for exports' which was awarded **1 mark**. In the final bullet point, the candidate states 'Scotland are unsure as to what currency they would use if they became independent.' This is a repetition of what has been said in the research findings section therefore, no marks were awarded here.

A conclusion mark can be transferred from the findings section as it has not been used in findings.

Overall, the candidate was awarded **13 out of 20 marks** for this assignment.

Candidate 4

Section A – Research topic/issue

The candidate has clearly identified an appropriate Modern Studies topic which relates to social Issues – crime and the law. The candidate also uses this section to state a hypothesis and three clear aims for their research.

Section B – Research methods

The candidate begins by referring to their first method of research – an Instagram poll. This is listed as Source 1 on their research sheet.

They say that they picked this method as they have a lot of friends and would get a good response rate. This was awarded **1 mark**. The candidate states that a strength of the Instagram poll is that it is easy to press the yes or no button, so people were more likely to participate. This was awarded **1 mark**.

The candidate goes on to say a weakness of this method is that people might just put down a random answer and this could have skewed their results. This was awarded **1 mark**. They then go on to state that their poll mainly asked people their age and to make it more representative, they could have asked different genders and ages. This was awarded **1 mark**.

The candidate says a thing they could do differently is to ask teachers who are more familiar with the subject to get a more accurate response. This was awarded **1 mark**.

The candidate then goes on to discuss another method of research – the UK Parliament website. This is listed as Source 2 on their research sheet.

They state that this 'is an official website by the proper people who work at parliament'. This was awarded **1 mark**. They go on to say that the website needs to be factual as they are held to account by the public. This was awarded **1 mark**.

The candidate states a strength of the website is that it is updated every day, or after a few days, so the information is current and correct. This was awarded **1 mark**.

They then say that another strength is that some of the documents are primary sources of law and legally binding, but this is poorly expressed and it is unclear what the candidate means therefore, no marks were awarded here. The next statement about political parties needing to be careful about what they post was not awarded any marks.

The candidate goes on to provide a generic weakness about how the website might not be very easy to use. This was awarded no marks.

The candidate provides a confused point of improvement about the use of the search bar which was awarded no marks. They then go on to state that next time they would ask an MP for an interview so they can get more detailed information. This was awarded **1 mark**.

Section C – Research findings

The candidate begins by saying that most people think prisoners shouldn't be able to vote because they are in prison for a punishment. This was awarded **1 mark**.

The candidate goes on to state that they found out that all prisoners should have human rights even though they have committed a crime. This was awarded **1 mark**.

The candidate goes on to provide a confused finding about the numbers of people in prison. No marks were awarded here.

The candidate provides another finding that the majority of people in prison are not allowed to vote in elections. This was awarded **1 mark**. They then state that people convicted and serving a custodial sentence are not allowed to vote whilst detained in custody. This was awarded **1 mark**.

The candidate goes on to say that they found out that people in prison can vote if they are on remand – convicted but not yet sentenced. This was awarded **1 mark**.

They then provided a confused finding about the European Court of human rights. No marks were awarded here.

Although, there are five potential findings identified, there is no direct link to the research sheet and this limits the findings to 4/6 marks.

Section D – Research conclusions

The candidate provides a conclusion that is a simple repetition of the hypothesis which is not worthy of credit. They go on to make a second conclusion relating to political parties losing voters which was muddled and vague therefore, no marks were awarded here.

The candidate goes on to make a conclusion about the public's opinion on whether prisoners should be able to vote, which is a repetition from a previous finding so no marks were awarded here.

Finally, the candidate provides a confused recommendation that the government should make a law allowing prisoners to vote. Again, no marks were awarded here.

Overall, the candidate was awarded **13 out of 20 marks** for this assignment.

Candidate 5

Section A – Research topic/issue

The candidate has clearly identified an appropriate Modern Studies topic which relates to social Issues – crime and the law. The candidate also uses this section to state a hypothesis and three clear aims for their research.

Section B – Research methods

There are no headings separating the different sections of the assignment, but it is clear when reading that the candidate is following the rubric of the assignment. We would however encourage candidates to use headings where appropriate.

The candidate begins by referring to their first method of research – a survey – and states that this is Source F on their research sheet. They say that they conducted their survey to directly investigate their third aim. It was felt that the candidate was suggesting that this method in particular was beneficial for finding out the public's opinion. This was awarded **1 mark**.

The candidate states that the survey was incredibly flexible and provided detail as to why this was the case. This was awarded **1 mark**.

They then go on to say that the survey was direct and easy to understand and answer. This was awarded **1 mark**. They then provide further detail by saying that this means that they are not giving people irrelevant information and they won't get side tracked. This was awarded **1 mark**.

The candidate goes on to provide another disadvantage of their survey, a 'limited range of opinions I collected'. This was awarded **1 mark**. They then develop this further by stating that most people surveyed were of a similar age and from the same area and that this meant the results were similar and did not give them a wide range of views. This was awarded **1 mark**.

They then provide a disadvantage saying that people might change their mind when they hear the opinions of other people. This was awarded **1 mark**.

The candidate then provides an alternative to their method of research used, which would be using a survey conducted by the government. This was awarded **1 mark**.

Overall, for the candidate's first method of research discussed, the candidate could have been awarded 8 marks however, the maximum that can be awarded for one research method is 6 marks.

The candidate goes on to discuss another method of research – the BBC website. This is listed as Source B on their research sheet. They state that they selected this method to answer their first aim about the causes of crime. Again, it was felt that the candidate was suggesting that this method in particular was beneficial for finding out causes of crime and this was awarded **1 mark**. They then go on to say that everything published by the BBC is verified and fact checked and this was awarded a further **1 mark**.

The candidate then thinks they are providing another advantage of their method, but they are in fact discussing their browser and not the website.

The candidate then states that one disadvantage of the BBC website was that it required internet access, this was repetition and therefore deemed not worthy of credit.

They then provide another disadvantage of the website, that being that there is lots of information and this slowed down their research. This was awarded **1 mark**.

Finally, the candidate states that an alternative method of research could be a book. This point is not developed and is too vague to be awarded any further marks.

Section C – Research findings

The candidate begins by providing a statistic about violent victimisation and the difference between high-income and low-income households. This was awarded **1 mark**. They then develop this point further by saying that this shows that violent crime is potentially more of a problem in income deprived areas. This was awarded **1 mark** and could also be considered a conclusion.

The next paragraph the candidate gives evidence from Source E saying that the ‘majority of adults in the UK believe rising poverty will lead to a rise in crime’. This is copied from the research sheet. They then go on to state that ‘65% of adults in the UK believe crime is mainly due to poverty, mental health issues or substance abuse’. This was awarded **1 mark**. They then state that ‘76% said they believe with poverty on the rise, crime rates will rise too’. This was awarded **1 mark**. And finally, in this paragraph they say ‘This shows just how many people believe poverty leads to

higher crime rates.’ This was awarded **1 mark** and could also be considered a conclusion.

In the next paragraph, the candidate goes on to say that there are nine main causes of crime, this is again on their research sheet. They then state that this included factors like criminal impulsivity, unemployment, peer pressure and a lack of education. This was awarded **1 mark**.

The candidate states that ‘crime was 40% higher in lower income areas’. This is a direct copy from the Source D URL on their research sheet. They then state ‘It also showed that the 10% most income deprived areas of London were 2.1 times more likely to experience robbery, violence and sexual offences.’ This was awarded **1 mark**. The candidate then thinks they are providing analysis, but this is repetition and therefore no further marks can be awarded.

The candidate says that they used the BBC website and that there are two main categories of causes of crime; nature and nurture. This is again copied from their research sheet and not worthy of credit. They then provide a description of nature and nurture and this was awarded **1 mark**.

Finally, the candidate states that from their survey they discovered that ‘70% said they thought poverty is the leading cause of crime, 20% said substance abuse and 10% said unemployment.’ This was awarded **1 mark**.

Overall, the findings section could have been awarded 9 marks however, the maximum that can be awarded in this section is 6 marks. There are however 2 conclusion marks that can be carried forward.

Section D – Research conclusions

The candidate begins this section with a conclusion about their hypothesis however, it was felt that this statement was too generic and not worthy of credit.

The candidate then states that their conclusion for their first aim is that there are two main categories of causes of crime and overall, nine main causes. This was awarded no marks as it is lifted from the research sheet.

The candidate then says that poverty and crime are very closely related. This was awarded **1 mark**. They develop this point further by stating that research showed that 'crime rates are almost always doubled when in an area of income deprivation, showing how much poverty impacts rates of victimisation'. This was awarded **1 mark**.

The candidate finishes Section D by making a conclusion about Aim 3 and states that 'most people believe poverty or unemployment is the number one cause of crime'. This was awarded **1 mark**.

There were also two conclusion marks that could have been carried over from the findings section.

Overall, the candidate was awarded **19 out of 20 marks** for this assignment.