Compulsory section A

The word GROVER refers to the **key methodological concerns.** In research design, these are key to justifying choices and for explaining the impact of problems on data collected.

Generalisability
Representativeness
Objectivity
Validity
Ethics
Reliability

Learn the following key terms. Making revision cards is a good idea. Write the definition on one side and the strengths and weaknesses on the other side. For example:

VALIDITY	
This describes how true the research findings are - do they get to the truth? Validity is hard to achieve and depends on a few different variables. Qualitative data is often more likely to achieve high validity but not always. Valid data is essential in research.	• Validity is often higher when using qualitative methods because a lot of data (information) is collected. • Where the sample can do, or say what they want to, without interference. This can generate more valid data. • This means that certain methods tend to be higher in validity than others but also lower on reliability because such methods tend to be difficult to repeat. Examples include observational methods, unstructured interviews and focus groups.

RELIABILITY	
This is a word used to describe how repeatable the research is. If it is easy to repeat in the same way and it generates the same results, these results are said to be reliable. Quantitative methods are easier to replicate (repeat) so are said to be high in reliability.	• Reliability can be high in methods such as questionnaires or structured interviews. • However, validity can be low when using these methods because they can lack detail.

Question 1a

Tip:
• Offer two reasons.
• Link each of the reasons to the aims of the research, a strength of the method/sampling technique and a methodological issue.
• Use what you know about research methods and sampling techniques to answer these questions but don't just write two strengths. The key to success here is **context**. So, try to work out what the researchers in the item were trying to achieve. What were the aims of the research? Then, try to think why the research method or sampling technique was good for helping them to achieve these aims.

Top band marks for 1a: Your answer must match these descriptors. Note the importance of **context**.

AO1 4	Knowledge will be **detailed** with 2 methodologically sound reasons clearly identified. There must be a clear link to the context for one of the reasons to get into this band.

AO2 5 - 6	Understanding will be **detailed** with 2 reasons clearly explained with reference to key methodological concepts. Both points will be contextualised for full marks. There must be a clear link to the context for one of the reasons to get into this band.

1b Research design

Do:
• know the key methodological issues (GROVER)
• be able to explain them
• use them to help evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of research methods
• know qualitative and quantitative methods
• explain why you have chosen a method in relation to the context of the task
• point out the weaknesses of your chosen design.

Don't:
• refer to studies in the design task unless they are absolutely relevant to your explanation
• write a list of the strengths and weaknesses of the method/ sampling technique
• suggest a design that is impractical
• forget the task.

A framework is often a useful way to organise the design and to make sure that no stage is left out. Here is a suggested framework but others will also work.

The design Write a section on each of the below using them as your design framework.	What will you do?	Explanations of each stage of the design. Why? Link to the task (context), strengths of the method and methodological issues	Problems? What are the weaknesses?	Impact of problems? Link to the task (context) & methodological issues
1. Operationalise key terms				
2. Select the **method**				
3. Consider any **ethical** considerations with either the focus of the research or the sample (BSA guide)				
4. Identify **sample/ target population** Will you use a sample frame? What **sampling** technique?				
5. Pilot study? (only with quantitative methods)				
6. How will you actually do the research? **Practical considerations** such as time and cost (make it realistic)				
7. Analysis of results (just say how)				

Top band mark descriptors for 1b research design questions:

AO1 9-10	Knowledge will be **detailed** with the proposed design described in detail with accurate use of key methodological concepts which show understanding. Most stages of the design will be described and the design is realistic.

AO2 9-10	Detailed and accurate explanations of the design are offered and linked to key methodological issues and the purpose of the research (context).

AO3 9-10	Detailed and accurate justification of the design in relation to the strengths of the method/ sampling techniques/ ethical issues, key concepts and context. Problems with the design and their impact on the data collected will be addressed.

Task

Read this extract from a research design. Work out whether it follows the advice given here and whether there is anything that could be improved. Annotate it with your own thoughts and ideas. Try colour coding the extract into skills.

The design brief is to collect data on roles in families amongst a sample of families in your area.

This is the section on choice of method:

I would use self-complete questionnaires for all family members. Using self-complete questionnaires would allow me to collect quantitative data but it will also be good for this research because completing a questionnaire on your own might encourage people to tell the truth and so the data would be valid. It is the kind of topic that might be somewhat sensitive or intrusive so the anonymity and confidentiality of the method should help to encourage truthful valid answers. This method is also high on reliability so I could repeat it and hopefully get the same results. I am trying to find out about roles in families so a questionnaire would enable me to ask about a range of roles and responsibilities, giving multiple choice responses which will be relatively easy to analyse and make comparisons between different family types and different genders and ages. However, this method won't provide me with rich detailed information and so even if the information that I do collect is valid it won't be detailed meaning I won't be able to understand the reasons behind the patterns. I also have to accept that respondents might lie, particularly because of the nature of the research focus. They might want to make themselves look good and might not be honest and this will seriously undermine the validity of the data. It also suffers from high non-response and this would impact the representativeness of my sample.