

Higher National Unit Specification

General information for centres

Unit title: Sociology A: Introducing Sociological Concepts and Theories

Unit code: DP3R 34

Unit purpose: This Unit is designed to introduce candidates to sociological concepts and theories.

On completion of this Unit, the candidate should be able to:

- 1 Explain the application of basic sociological concepts to developing a sociological analysis of social life.
- 2 Explain the ways in which sociological theories provide a framework for examining one area of social life.

Credit points and level: 1 HN Credit at SCQF level 7: (8 SCQF credit points at SCQF level 7*)

**SCQF credit points are used to allocate credit to qualifications in the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF). Each qualification in the Framework is allocated a number of SCQF credit points at an SCQF level. There are 12 SCQF levels, ranging from Access 1 to Doctorates.*

Recommended prior knowledge and skills: Candidates should possess good communication skills. Other knowledge, skills and experience relevant to the Unit would also be beneficial. Previous study of Sociology through Units and National Qualifications at Intermediate and Higher level, or other similar qualifications, is desirable but not essential. Ultimately, entry is at the discretion of the centre.

Core skills: There will be opportunities to gather evidence towards Core Skills in this Unit, although there is no automatic certification of Core Skills or Core Skills components. Further detail is provided in the Support Notes.

Context for delivery: If this Unit is delivered as part of a Group Award, it is recommended that it should be taught and assessed within the subject area of the Group Award to which it contributes. This Unit can be taught and assessed as a stand-alone Unit. This Unit is included in the framework for the HNC/HND in Social Sciences.

General information for centres (cont)

Assessment: This Unit will be assessed holistically by a single instrument of assessment covering all Unit Outcomes. This will take the form of one structured assessment with stem, broken down into no more than two questions. Question 1 should sample material from Outcome 1 and should take the form of an extended response. Question 2 should sample material from Outcome 2 and should also take the form of an extended response. The total response for both questions should amount to approximately 1,500 words. Candidates will not know the questions in advance. The use of notes, textbooks, handouts and other materials will not be permitted. It is recommended that the assessment is undertaken in one sitting of two-three hours' duration. The assessment will be conducted under supervision.

An exemplar instrument of assessment and marking guidelines has been produced to indicate the national standard of achievement required at SCQF level 7.

Higher National Unit specification: statement of standards

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The sections of the Unit stating the Outcomes, knowledge and/or skills, and evidence requirements are mandatory.

Where evidence for Outcomes is assessed on a sample basis, the whole of the content listed in the knowledge and/or skills section must be taught and available for assessment. Candidates should not know in advance the items on which they will be assessed and different items should be sampled on each assessment occasion.

Outcome 1

Explain the application of basic sociological concepts to developing a sociological analysis of social life

Knowledge and/or skills

- ◆ common sense versus sociological explanations of social phenomena
- ◆ C Wright Mills and the ‘sociological imagination’
- ◆ the role of the following sociological concepts in shaping human behaviour: socialisation, norms, values, status, power, authority, expectations, roles and cultural rules

Outcome 2

Explain the ways in which sociological theories provide a framework for examining one area of social life

Knowledge and/or skills

- ◆ the extent to which a theory is a structural or action explanation of behaviour
- ◆ the ways in which consensus theories explain one area of social life
- ◆ the ways in which conflict theories explain one area of social life
- ◆ the ways in which action theories explain one area of social life
- ◆ the ways in which post modern approaches explain one area of social life

Evidence requirements for the Unit

This Unit will be assessed holistically by a single instrument of assessment covering all Unit Outcomes. This will take the form of one structured assessment with stem, broken down into no more than two questions. Question 1 should sample material from Outcome 1 and should take the form of an extended response. Question 2 should sample material from Outcome 2 and should also take the form of an extended response. The total response for both questions should amount to approximately 1,500 words. Candidates will not know the questions in advance. The use of notes, textbooks, handouts and other materials will not be permitted. It is recommended that the assessment is undertaken in one sitting of two-three hours’ duration. The assessment will be conducted under supervision.

Higher National Unit specification: statement of standards (cont)

Unit title: Sociology A: Introducing Sociological Concepts and Theories

Each candidate will need to provide evidence demonstrating all of the above knowledge and/or skills items for Outcomes 1 and 2. Answers must include evidence to show that each candidate can:

- ◆ distinguish correctly between common sense and sociological explanations of social phenomena
- ◆ correctly explain the term ‘sociological imagination’
- ◆ correctly explain the role of **four** basic sociological concepts in shaping human behaviour
- ◆ correctly explain the extent to which a theory is a structural or action explanation of behaviour
- ◆ correctly apply **two** theories from the four prescribed categories of theory below in explaining **one** area of social life

Theories

- 1 Consensus theory: Functionalism
- 2 Conflict theory: Marxism
 Feminism
- 3 Social action theory: Weber’s social action theory
 Symbolic interactionism
 Ethnomethodology
 Phenomenology
 (NB: Only **two** social action theories need to be taught from the above list)
- 4 Postmodern approaches: Lyotard and the postmodern condition
 Jameson and the culture of late capitalism
 Foucault and power
 (NB: Only **two** postmodern approaches need to be taught from the above list).

All nine concepts and all four prescribed categories of theory must be taught. Candidates should be prepared to be assessed on all concepts and all theories. The sample for assessment should be changed on each assessment occasion.

Administrative Information

Unit code:	DP3R 34
Unit title:	Sociology A: Introducing Sociological Concepts and Theories
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Higher National Unit specification: support notes

Unit title: Sociology A: Introducing Sociological Concepts and Theories

This part of the Unit specification is offered as guidance. The support notes are not mandatory.

While the exact time allocated to this Unit is at the discretion of the centre, the notional design length is 40 hours.

Guidance on the content and context for this Unit

The aims of this Unit are two-fold. First, it enables candidates to understand key sociological concepts such as socialisation, norms, values, status, power, authority, expectations, roles and cultural rules. Second, it provides candidates with a theoretical framework within which, using historical and/or contemporary examples, they will be able to grasp the complexities of one area of social life.

In terms of sampling:

- ◆ the nine concepts stated under knowledge and skills should be taught but only four will be assessed.
- ◆ the four categories of theory should be taught but only two will be assessed. The two categories of theory will be applied to one area of social life. Some suggested appropriate areas of social life for consideration would be:
 - the family
 - education
 - work and non-work
 - religion
 - health and health care
 - mass media
 - methodology
 - gender

Other areas of social life may be considered appropriate for theoretical analysis at this level. It would not be expected that candidates would address the chosen area in as much depth as they would be expected to understand topics/areas in *DP3T 34 Sociology B: Application and Analysis of Sociological Theory to Sociological Topics*.

Guidance on the delivery and assessment of this Unit

In delivering this Unit, lecturers should encourage candidates to look at Scottish examples, where appropriate. For example, the extent to which Scottish families are different to families in other countries with regard to cultural beliefs and practices or, indeed whether it makes sociological sense to refer to Scottish families as distinct from families found in other parts of the world. Or, with regard to the education system, for example, the unique features of the Scottish system could be explored. For learning and teaching purposes, all nine concepts referred to in Outcome 1 should be covered as basic sociological concepts that provide candidates with an indication of the range and scope of sociological study.

Higher National Unit specification: support notes (cont)

Unit title: Sociology A: Introducing Sociological Concepts and Theories

Delivery of these concepts should be presented against a background of what sociology is and what it attempts to do. To this end, lecturers should make reference to differences between common sense and sociological explanations and the ‘sociological imagination’ as defined by C Wright Mills.

All four categories of theory should be taught for Outcome 2 and **two** categories should be sampled for assessment purposes. Lecturers should present these categories in relation to their broader sociological perspective, ie structural and/or action and in assessment responses candidates should introduce a particular theory with reference to the fundamental assumptions underlying the broader sociological perspective from which it originates. This could be evidenced by candidates accurately stating the extent to which the theory is structural and/or action and whether it is a consensus, conflict, action or post modern theory.

NB: In Outcome 2, the category ‘post modern’ has been termed as an approach rather than a theory in recognition of the fact that many post modern approaches critique the validity of theory itself. This should not, however, debar its inclusion in an Outcome covering sociological theory as the difference in term usage may be essentially semantic.

In terms of theory, Marxists explain the rise of the nuclear family and the roles of the housewife/breadwinner as developing in line with the needs of capital, eg industrialisation and the institution of wage labour and the creation of private domestic Units as Units of private consumption. Norms, values, status and roles arise from these arrangements and are perpetuated through ruling class ideology. Functionalists view the family as a ‘safe haven’ and the nuclear family as universal and the most efficient form in terms of childrearing, use of natural talents and abilities and gender-appropriate behaviour. For them, norms, values, status and roles are naturally occurring and consistent with social order in complex societies.

Assessment will be two extended responses amounting to approximately 1,500 words in total.

The Unit can be delivered in a flexible way to best suit lecturer expertise, candidates’ needs and time constraints. This could include formal lectures, group discussions, class exercises, tutorials, seminars and the use of audio/visual stimuli.

Opportunities for developing Core Skills

This Unit provides a range of opportunities for developing four of the five Core Skills. The extent of development will depend on the learning opportunities chosen by the candidate or the delivery and assessment methods selected by the tutor.

Communication — The delivery and assessment of this Unit may contribute towards the component *Written Communication* at Higher if the assessment is an essay. The general skill for this component is ‘Produce well-structured written communication on complex topics’. Opportunity also exists for the development of the oral component ‘Produce and respond to oral communication on a complex topic’ by setting tasks for group activity and arranging joint information feedback sessions.

Higher National Unit specification: support notes (cont)

Unit title: Sociology A: Introducing Sociological Concepts and Theories

In both formative and summative assessment the candidate should be encouraged to present all essential ideas/information and supporting detail in a logical and effective order; use a structure that takes account of purpose and audience and links major and minor points in ways which assist the clarity and impact of the writing; use conventions which are effective in achieving the purpose and adapted as necessary for the target audience and use spelling, punctuation and sentence structures which are consistently accurate.

These skills can be developed through formative activities, such as short essays, without being formally assessed for Core Skill certification.

Working with Others — A tutor may actively choose to develop the general skill of ‘Work with others in a group to analyse, plan and complete an activity’ at Intermediate 2 level by setting tasks for group activity and arranging joint information feedback sessions. Candidates could be encouraged to collaborate at the early stages of their search activities.

Information Technology — Opportunities to develop this skill can easily be incorporated into the delivery of the Unit by supporting the candidate to carry out information searches using efficient and effective search strategies. This will contribute towards the component *Using an IT system effectively and responsibly to process a range of information*, specifically the skill ‘carry out two searches to extract and present relevant information from electronic data sources’ at Intermediate 2 level. This Core Skill could be developed without formal certification.

Problem Solving — This Core Skill will be developed at Higher level throughout this Unit particularly in planning the tasks. Tutors should encourage learners to explore appropriate strategies for managing their time and evaluating the considerable amount of data available on the topics contained in this Unit. Tutors may actively choose to further develop this skill by setting tasks for group activity and arranging joint information feedback sessions. This will contribute towards the component *Critical Thinking* where the general skill of ‘analysing a complex situation or issue will be developed’, the component *Planning and Organising* where the general skill of ‘planning, organising and completing a complex task’ will be developed and the component *Reviewing and Evaluating* where the general skill of ‘reviewing and evaluating a complex problem solving activity’ will be developed. This Core Skill could be developed without formal certification.

Open learning

The Unit could be delivered by open or distance learning. However, it would require planning by the centre to ensure sufficiency and authenticity of candidate evidence. Arrangements would have to be made to ensure that the assessment for Outcomes 1 and 2 was conducted under supervision.

Candidates with additional support needs

This Unit specification is intended to ensure that there are no artificial barriers to learning or assessment. The additional support needs of individual candidates should be taken into account when planning learning experiences, selecting assessment instruments or considering alternative Outcomes for Units. For information on these, please refer to the SQA document *Guidance on Assessment Arrangements for Candidates with Disabilities and/or Additional Support Needs*, which is available on the SQA website www.sqa.org.uk.

General information for candidates

Unit title: Sociology A: Introducing Sociological Concepts and Theories

In the HN Unit *DP3R 34 Sociology A: Introducing Sociological Concepts and Theories*, you will cover a range of sociological concepts and theories related to one area of sociology. For Outcome 1 you will apply basic sociological concepts to developing a sociological analysis, including defining the difference between sociological and common sense approaches to social life. You will cover nine sociological concepts.

For Outcome 2, you will cover four key theories that support the arguments raised in the area of social life covered.

However, for assessment purposes you will only be required to cover four of these concepts and two of these theories and apply them to one area of social life.

You will be assessed by producing two extended responses amounting to approximately 1,500 words in total.

Your tutor will set the assessment task at an appropriate point in the delivery of the Unit, with she/he giving you sufficient advance notice for the sitting of the closed-book assessment.