



Higher National Unit specification: general information

Unit title: Sociology D: Specialist Study

Unit code: FK8P 35

Superclass: EE

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Unit purpose

This Unit is designed to develop candidates' knowledge and understanding of a particular theory, theorist or study from the field of sociology. The Unit involves a focused and systematic review and critique of the key features and contributions of a selected theory, theorist or study to the development of sociology and sociological thinking. This Unit is intended for candidates who have a basis and knowledge of sociology and wish to further develop this in a practical way.

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

- 1 Critically evaluate one theory, theorist or study from sociology.
- 2 Assess the contribution of one theory, theorist or study to the development of sociology and sociological thinking.

Recommended prior knowledge and skills

Candidates should possess good communication skills. Other knowledge, skills and experience relevant to the Unit would also be beneficial.

In addition, candidates would benefit from achievement of HN Unit *Sociology A: Introduction to Sociology*, HN Unit *Sociology B: Applying Sociological Theories and Studies to Sociological Topics*, HN Unit *Sociology C: Analysing and Evaluating Sociological Debates*

Ultimately, entry is at the discretion of the centre.

General information (cont)

Credit points and level

1 Higher National Unit credit at SCQF level 8: (8 SCQF credit points at SCQF level 8*)

**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.*

Core Skills

There are opportunities to develop the Core Skills of *Communication* at SCQF level 6, *Problem Solving* at SCQF level 6 and *Information and Communication Technology* at SCQF level 5 in this Unit, although there is no automatic certification of Core Skills or Core Skills components.

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.

Assessment

This Unit will be holistically assessed by a single Instrument of Assessment covering all Unit Outcomes. This will take the form of an open-book assessment covering a critical evaluation and assessment of the contribution of one theory, theorist or study to the development of sociology and sociological thinking.

An exemplar Instrument of Assessment and marking information have been produced, in addition to this document, to indicate the national standard of achievement required at SCQF level 8.

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

Critically evaluate one theory, theorist or study from sociology.

Knowledge and/or Skills

- ◆ An overview of a variety of sociological theories, theorists or studies from sociology.
- ◆ Description and analysis of one theory, theorist or study in sociology.
- ◆ Critical evaluation of key features, ideas, concepts of one theory, theorist or study in sociology.

Outcome 2

Assess the contribution of one theory, theorist or study to the development of sociology and sociological thinking.

Knowledge and/or Skills

- ◆ Description and analysis of relevant and appropriate academic knowledge to set the theory, theorist or study in context.
- ◆ Critical evaluation of the contribution of the theory, theorist or study to the development of sociology and sociological thinking.

Evidence Requirements

Candidates will need to provide evidence to demonstrate their Knowledge and/or Skills by showing that they can: apply knowledge and skills to a critical evaluation of one theory, theorist or study in sociology and an assessment of the contribution one theory, theorist or study to the development of sociology and sociological thinking.

This Unit will be holistically assessed by a single open-book Instrument of Assessment covering all Unit Outcomes. Candidates should be given the task at an appropriate point of delivery of the Unit.

Higher National Unit specification: statement of standards (cont)

Unit title: Sociology D: Specialist Study

Response to the task set should include:

- ◆ an in depth explanation and critical evaluation of the key features, ideas, concepts of one theory, theorist or study in sociology
- ◆ setting the selected theory, theorist or study within an historical, socio/cultural, personal, intellectual or subject context
- ◆ a critical evaluation of the contribution of one theory, theorist or study to the development of sociology and sociological thinking

Regardless of the assessment method chosen, the candidate must submit a bibliography presented in a standard referencing format, such as Harvard.

Assessment Guidelines

The assessment for Outcome 1 is linked with the assessment for Outcome 2 by instructing candidates to critically evaluate the key features, ideas, concepts and of one theory, theorist or study and assess the contribution of one theory, theorist or study to the development of sociology and sociological thinking.

The exercise should test critical and evaluative skills. The assessment does not need to be conducted under supervision. It is recommended that the theory, theorist or study is agreed in advance by the candidate and lecturer.

Lecturers should present candidates with a list of theories, theorists and studies (of no less than six and no more than ten) from which to make their choice. Once a theory, theorist or study has been chosen, appropriate material (eg texts, journal articles/papers/books, etc) will have to be selected to undertake the assessment.

There is a wide variety of methods of assessment that would allow candidates to meet the Evidence Requirements. The following are suggestions and there may be other methods that would be suitable. Centres are reminded that prior verification would help to ensure that the national standard is being met.

This assessment could take the form of an open-book essay *or* set of structured questions with an expected candidate response of approximately 2000 words *or* an individual oral presentation *or* poster exhibition with expected candidate's response of approximately 15 minutes in presentation or explanation of the poster *or* any other method that is appropriate to meet the Evidence Requirements. Candidates could also provide the evidence requirements in the form of an individual Blog or creation of a website, with approximately 2000 words.

It is possible to combine the oral presentation with the poster exhibition, where candidate covers Knowledge and/or Skills of explaining the foundations of sociology in a poster and covers the contribution of sociological concepts and theories to sociological explanations of human behaviour and society in an oral presentation on the same occasion. Where this occurs the total time for all aspects would be approximately 15 minutes (rather than 15 minutes each). See 'Guidance on delivery and assessment' for further details. It is recommended that oral presentations are recorded in some form.

NB: It is important that the language used in the assessment instrument reflects SCQF level 8 in each type of task.

Higher National Unit specification: support notes

Unit title: Sociology D: Specialist Study

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

This is one of a suite of Units that covers Sociology within HNC/D Social Sciences Group Awards. This Unit builds on knowledge and skills demonstrated in *Sociology B: Applying Sociological Theories and Studies to Sociological Topics* and *Sociology C: Analysing and Evaluating Sociological Debates*. The Unit can be taught as a free-standing Unit or as part of the HND Social Sciences Group Award.

The aim of this Unit is to provide an opportunity for candidates to get an in depth understanding of the contribution of a selected sociological theory, theorist or study to the development of sociology and sociological thinking. This will involve critically evaluating the key features, ideas and concepts that are at the heart of the sociological theory, theorist or study and critically evaluating the contribution to the development of sociology and sociological thinking by setting the selected theory, theorist or study within an historical, socio/cultural, personal, intellectual or subject context.

Candidates will require access to a list of theories, theorists or studies that have made a contribution to the development of sociology and sociological thinking.

These can span the full spectrum of sociological writing, from early classical writers and publications to more contemporary sources covering any topic or aspect of sociological investigation.

Guidance on the delivery and assessment of this Unit

Given that the purpose of the Unit is to critically evaluate and assess a selected sociological theory, theorist or study it would be appropriate for delivering lecturers to draw up a short list of suitable theories, theorists or studies for investigation from which candidates would make a choice. Selection could include any sociological or social theory or theorist and related published theses or studies. The following are suggestions: Marxism, functionalism, structural functionalism, social Darwinism, social action, symbolic interactionism, ethnomethodology, rational exchange theory, critical theory, cultural studies, post-structuralism, figurationalism, structuration theory, world systems theory, theories of globalisation, modernisation theory, dependency theory, semiotics, feminisms, postmodernism, queer theory, Comte, Spencer, Marx, Durkheim, Simmel, Weber, Mead, Goffman, Garfinkel, Foucault, Lyotard, Wallerstein, Robertson, Parsons, Elias, Gramsci, Althusser, Firestone, Oakley, Williams, Hall, Beck, Giddens, Freud, Vygotsky, Rojek, Featherstone, Douglas amongst others. Studies can come from classical or contemporary sources and may have a conceptual, theoretical or methodological focus.

Higher National Unit specification: support notes (cont)

Unit title: Sociology D: Specialist Study

Candidates should make their choice in discussion with their lecturer. This will allow for both candidate 'freedom' to choose a particular area of interest, and lecturer input, guidance and support to be achieved. Given the higher order nature of this task there will need to be a degree of 'structured guidance' from lecturers. The choice of theory, theorist or study will determine the kind of narrative the candidate will use in critically evaluating and assessing the contribution of the theory, theorist or study to the development of sociology and sociological thinking.

Centres should design an appropriate assessment instrument based on a method that is suitable in allowing candidates to meet the Evidence Requirements. This can be written or oral (depending on the needs of the candidates and the organisational aspects for the centre in choosing particular methods). If an oral method is chosen, it is recommended that centres record this (either by DVD or digital recorder etc.) or provide assessor notes on the presentation for external verification purposes. Oral presentations (or poster exhibitions) must be done individually as each candidate has to show evidence of meeting all Evidence Requirements, so a group presentation would not be suitable. If the centre is using a Blog or creation of a website as the way of gathering evidence, this should not be in the public domain. Rather it should be on an Intranet or private area of a VLE to reduce the likelihood of plagiarism. Authenticating a candidate's work is essential. It would be helpful to collect notes or PPT presentation materials from a candidate as further evidence of meeting SCQF level 8 in the presentation.

A centre can choose to use a mixture of methods across a cohort, as it may be more suitable for some candidates to give a written response and for others to use an oral method or to create a 'Blog' etc. It is possible to combine the poster exhibition with an oral presentation, where, for example, a candidate may produce a detailed poster of the foundations of sociology and the sociological imagination but would cover the sociological concepts and theories in an oral presentation using PPT or a mind map as a visual aid. In the case of a combination of poster and oral presentation, the time across both outcomes, with all Evidence Requirements covered would be 15 minutes (not 15 minutes each for the poster and for the oral presentation, but rather combining both in the time). They should also be done on the same occasion. Whichever method is chosen the candidates should be allowed access to notes, text books or other materials in preparation and delivery of the assessment as the assessment must be conducted open-book.

Centres should make sure they can authenticate a candidate's work. This may be done by questioning a candidate about their work, by seeing drafts of work under construction, by having partial write-up in presence of assessor or by using an anti-plagiarism tool, such as Turnitin or SafeAssign, which checks Internet sites.

Remediation should be done by a review of the original work. Candidates should be asked to hand in a complete piece of work, with amendments incorporated in the appropriate context, rather than a large add-on at the end, or asked to fully rewrite their work to a prescribed format if it did not meet requirements. Oral clarification could be used for minor omissions or to clarify minor detail. If it is thought appropriate that a candidate tackle a different topic or question, then that new submission would count as a reassessment.

Higher National Unit specification: support notes (cont)

Unit title: Sociology D: Specialist Study

In oral work, candidates can be questioned by the assessor at the end of their presentation or explanation, where minor omissions occur, or where clarity is required. This would help to reduce the need for reassessment. However, where more work is required to meet the evidence requirements (eg where the quality of evidence is poor in a presentation) another presentation of the same duration, on the same topic or question as the original would be required. Only where a different topic or question is attempted would this be classed as reassessment.

Centres should structure the teaching programme to allow time for development of Core Skills and other transferable skills and for assessment practice within the notional hours suggested.

Opportunities for developing Core Skills

The delivery and assessment of this Unit may contribute towards the development of Core Skills of *Communication*, *Problem Solving* and *Information and Communication Technology*. It can also support the development of other transferable skills, such as, essay writing, referencing, citation and bibliography skills and thinking, analytical and critical skills.

It is possible to develop **Communication at SCQF level 6** if the assessment takes the form of an essay or oral presentation. **For written communication at SCQF level 6 the skill is: produce well structured written communication on complex topics.** To develop this skill candidates can be encouraged in both formative and summative assessment to present all essential ideas/information and supporting detail in a logical and effective order; use a structure that is organised and use paragraphing to make distinctions between facts, opinions, arguments and conclusion, use a format, layout, and word choice which are appropriate to the content and context, and use spelling, punctuation, vocabulary and sentence structures which are consistently accurate.

The candidates could be tasked with producing a written communication which presents, analyses, and evaluates a substantial body of information. These skills can be developed through formative activities, such as shorter essays and presentations without being formally assessed for certification of Core Skill. Communicating an in depth explanation and critical evaluation of the key features, ideas, concepts and contribution to sociology and sociological thinking of one theory, theorist or study, including setting the selected theory, theorist or study within an historical, socio/cultural, personal, intellectual or subject context requires communication, critical and evaluation skills that easily fits with SCQF level 6.

It is important to develop essay-writing skills for candidates' future progression. In doing this candidates should also be encouraged to use an appropriate referencing method, such as Harvard, for any formative or summative essays. Referencing, citation and bibliography skills are best developed using the vehicle of formative essay writing.

Higher National Unit specification: support notes (cont)

Unit title: Sociology D: Specialist Study

For oral communication at SCQF level 6 the skill is: produce and respond to oral communication on a complex topic. In both formative and summative assessment the candidate could be encouraged to give a detailed oral presentation offering an explanation and critical evaluation of the key features, ideas, concepts and contribution to sociology and sociological thinking of one theory, theorist or study, including setting the selected theory, theorist or study within an historical, socio/cultural, personal, intellectual or subject context. The specific skills of using an appropriate level of vocabulary, consistent spoken language structures and formality, conveying all essential information, opinions, or ideas with supporting detail accurately and coherently, and with varied emphasis as appropriate and responding to others, taking account of their contributions would be developed in an oral presentation or in an oral explanation of a poster exhibition. Although a summative assessment would require individual work and individual presentation, a formative assessment could be constructed that would encourage candidates to work in a small group, with a few people contributing to the presentation. This may allow a candidate to experience the demands of oral presentation before choosing this as an option for summative assessment of the Unit (if the centre is able to give that choice).

For the Core Skill of *Information and Communication Technology* at SCQF level 5 the skills are: ‘Accessing Information, use ICT independently, effectively, and responsibly to access information within a range of tasks’ and ‘Providing/Creating Information, use ICT independently, effectively, and responsibly to carry out a range of processing tasks’. This Unit can help to develop such skills by the use of mini formative presentations using PowerPoint or other ICT presentation tool that will also support the development of oral communication. A summative assessment using ICT presentation methods is also possible. Specific areas of accessing information using Internet searches or VLE use and providing and creating information can be developed in such tasks. Creating a Blog or a website for the summative assessment is another way in which this Core Skill can be developed. This could be used where candidates (and their lecturer) have particular skills and interest in ICT.

The Core Skill of *Problem Solving* can be developed at SCQF level 6 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 could 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**’ and the component **Reviewing and Evaluating** where the general skill of ‘**reviewing and evaluating a complex problem solving activity**’ can be developed. This Core Skill could be developed without formal certification.

Thinking, analytical and critical skills are developed by posing questions at appropriate points in the delivery, enabling discussion and the requirement for candidates to take responsibility for learning by encouraging the development of research skills via the Internet or using texts, journal articles/papers/books, etc

Higher National Unit specification: support notes (cont)

Unit title: Sociology D: Specialist Study

Curriculum for Excellence

The Curriculum for Excellence aspires to place learners at the centre of the curriculum and develop their capacities as Successful Learners, Confident Individuals, Responsible Citizens and Effective Contributors. These four capacities will be developed throughout this Unit.

This Unit will develop the literacy and communication skills of the learners by way of formative and summative assessments. Independent learning is required throughout this Unit, whilst the opportunity is available for group learning through formative tasks. The discipline of sociology demands independent and critical thinking that enables learners to reach satisfactory conclusions about the relationship between the individual and society. There is further opportunity to develop ICT and research skills through the internet, the production of word documents, PowerPoint presentations, academic posters, blogs and/or the creation of a wiki or website. Collectively the development of these skills contributes towards the creation of a **Successful Learner**.

Time management skills should improve during the delivery of this Unit, as should the ability to relate and work with others through formative tasks. The specialist study approach to Sociology 'D' should allow learners to develop knowledge and understanding of the impact a social theory; theorist or study has had on the discipline of sociology. The learner will be encouraged to take a self directed approach as they work through the Unit whilst expressing a range of personal and informed opinions within the classroom setting. This should lead to the emergence of a **Confident Individual**, particularly if they gain success in the achievement of the Unit.

Sociology 'D' can also contribute to learners becoming **Responsible Citizens** by encouraging learners to develop a critical understanding of the workings of society and their place in it. Sociology allows the opportunity to consider a range of complex issues and an understanding of different sociological, historical, psychological, ethical, moral and political viewpoints around issues of gender, sexuality, disability, ethnicity, social class, national and cultural identity.

Learners can become **Effective Contributors** to society by learning to work together effectively in teams within the class setting. This can be achieved through group work where they can apply critical thinking within new contexts. In planning group tasks, evaluating data and presenting their findings, learners will also develop problem solving skills. Both oral and written communication skills will also be developed. This can be achieved through written work, PowerPoint presentations, academic posters, blogs and/or the creation of a wiki or website.

All these skills are achievable within the Unit.

Higher National Unit specification: support notes (cont)

Unit title: Sociology D: Specialist Study

Open learning

This 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.

A written response in the form of an essay or answers to structured questions could be posted or emailed to the assessor or uploaded onto a VLE. An oral presentation could be used that would be recorded on DVD and sent to the assessor, or could be done using video-conferencing or web-link and observed by the assessor.

Disabled candidates and/or those with additional support needs

The additional support needs of individual candidates should be taken into account when planning learning experiences, selecting assessment instruments, or considering whether any reasonable adjustments may be required. Further advice can be found on our website www.sqa.org.uk/assessmentarrangements.

History of changes to Unit

| Version | Description of change | Date |
|---------|---|----------|
| 02 | Clarification of remediation and reassessment requirements. | 13/11/12 |
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General information for candidates

Unit title: Sociology D: Specialist Study

This Unit offers you the opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of sociology by carrying out an in depth focused and systematic review and critique of a selected theory, theorist or study in sociology. You will select a theory, theorist or study from a list provided by your lecturer. The assessment will focus on you explaining and critically evaluating the key features, ideas and concepts of your chosen theory, theorist or study and critically evaluating the contribution to the development of sociology and sociological thinking by setting the selected theory, theorist or study within an historical, socio/cultural, personal, intellectual or subject context.

You will be given the task/question at an appropriate point in the delivery of the Unit. The assessment may be a written essay of approximately 2000 words or a set of structured questions with an expected response of approximately 2000 words or an oral presentation of 15 minutes or a poster exhibition of 15 minutes and oral explanation or another method decided by your centre. Your centre will inform you of the chosen method, which will be *open-book*. This means that you will be allowed access to materials (eg text books, notes, VLE).

As you progress through the Unit material, you will be encouraged to develop the Core Skills of *Communication* at SCQF level 6, *Problem Solving* at SCQF level 6 and *Information and Communication Technology* at SCQF level 5 by the types of activities you will experience.

You will also be given opportunities throughout the Unit to develop as a successful learner, a confident individual, a responsible citizen and an effective contributor.