

National Unit Specification: general information

UNIT Studying Human Society: The Sociological Approach
(Intermediate 1)

CODE DV3P 10

SUMMARY

This Unit is designed to introduce candidates at a basic level to the variety of sociological theories and methods of research that characterise the discipline of sociology. It enables candidates to describe the main features of some of the major sociological theories. The Unit also enables candidates to understand the methods applied by sociologists to their research. It provides a framework for understanding human behaviour from different sociological theories. By examining major theories candidates will be able to describe their contribution to our understanding of the nature and development of human societies.

This is a free-standing Intermediate 1 Sociology Unit, but links well to the Units *Social Stratification* (Intermediate 1) and *Socialisation* (Intermediate 1)

OUTCOMES

- 1 Describe the contribution of key sociological theories to an understanding of human social behaviour.
- 2 Describe the main methods of sociological research.

Administrative Information

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National Unit Specification: general information (cont)

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RECOMMENDED ENTRY

While entry is at the discretion of the centre, candidates would normally be expected to have attained one of the following, or equivalent:

- ◆ A Standard Grade social subject at Foundation level
- ◆ Standard Grade English at Foundation level

CREDIT VALUE

1 credit at Intermediate 1 (6 SCQF credit points at SCQF level 4*)

**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 is no automatic certification of Core Skills or Core Skills components in this Unit.

National Unit Specification: statement of standards

UNIT Studying Human Society: The Sociological Approach (Intermediate 1)

Acceptable performance in this Unit will be the satisfactory achievement of the standards set out in this part of the Unit Specification. All sections of the statement of standards are mandatory and cannot be altered without reference to the Scottish Qualifications Authority.

OUTCOME 1

Describe the contribution of key sociological theories to an understanding of human social behaviour

Performance Criteria

- (a) Make basic distinctions between common sense and sociological knowledge clearly and correctly.
- (b) Correctly identify and describe key features of sociological theories, using relevant examples.

OUTCOME 2

Describe the main methods of sociological research

Performance Criteria

- (a) Describe primary methods of research correctly.
- (b) Describe secondary methods of research correctly.

EVIDENCE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE UNIT

The mandatory content/context for this Unit is detailed in the Appendix to the Statement of Standards.

Evidence Requirements apply to the Unit as a whole and, therefore, apply holistically to all Outcomes of the Unit.

Candidates must produce written and/or oral evidence for all Outcomes and Performance Criteria to achieve the Unit. The assessment should take the form of an unseen, closed-book, supervised test that should be completed in one hour or less. It should be taken on a single occasion. The instrument of assessment should take the form of a range of restricted response-type questions, and should make use of stimulus material as a tool with which to help candidates focus on the question(s) posed.

The theories and research methods should be covered prior to candidates being asked to prepare for assessment. Candidates *should not* be informed prior to the Unit assessment which research methods they will be assessed on. The introductory part of the Unit, dealing with how sociology provides a studied response to views on human behaviour and social life, will always be assessed as part of the Unit assessment.

Candidates must cover the following **four** theories: functionalism; Marxism, feminism; social action but will only be assessed on **two** of these theories.

National Unit Specification: statement of standards (cont)

UNIT Studying Human Society: The Sociological Approach (Intermediate 1)

Candidates must also cover all **seven** primary research methods and the **three** secondary research methods as listed in the Appendix to the Statement of Standards but will only be assessed on **two** primary research methods and **one** secondary research method.

Candidate responses at this level will be wholly descriptive — there is no requirement to analyse or evaluate in Outcomes or Performance Criteria.

Sampling

Assessment of the Unit should incorporate appropriate sampling of the Unit content. For example, if a candidate demonstrates knowledge and understanding of two examples of primary research methods, and one example of a secondary research method, it is inferred that he/she can demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the other research methods.

Any requirement for reassessment will be based on a different sample from the range of content, including a different research method, where appropriate. Candidates should attempt a different instrument of assessment in its entirety.

Achievement will be decided by the use of a cut-off score. The standard to be applied and the breadth of coverage are illustrated in the National Assessment Bank items available for this Unit. If a centre wishes to design its own assessments for this Unit, they should be of comparable standard.

National Unit Specification: support notes

UNIT Studying Human Society: The Sociological Approach (Intermediate 1)

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

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

GUIDANCE ON THE CONTENT AND CONTEXT FOR THE UNIT

The Appendix to the Statement of Standards contains the mandatory requirements for this Unit.

This Unit has the same content as the Unit *Studying Human Society: The Sociological Approach* (Intermediate 2). However the Units are differentiated by Outcomes, Performance Criteria and Evidence Requirements.

The Unit, like its Intermediate 2 counterpart, offers an introduction to sociological theory and research methods. The Unit is intended to introduce candidates to theories and methods by encouraging them to draw upon their own life experiences, where possible, in order to help make abstract theories more concrete.

All sociology rests upon concepts, theories and methods, which characterise its distinctive approach in explaining human social behaviour. The Unit addresses the variety of sociological theories and the particular explanations they give of human social behaviour at a basic introductory level. It includes a description of functionalist, Marxist, feminist and social action theories as explanations that seek to understand and describe the social world. It also establishes, at an introductory level, the link between those theories and the actual research methods and strategies that may be adopted to provide evidence for sociological argument. This is important, as all sociological knowledge is based upon evidence that is gathered by sociologists in a variety of ways. One of the aims of the Unit is to develop a basic knowledge of the methods employed by sociologists in their research. It is intended to establish the foundations of critical understanding in relation to sociological information and to distinguish it from 'common sense' or personal opinion, both of which construct explanations of human behaviour in terms of naturalistic and/or individualistic assumptions. It is recommended that the concepts of social stratification and socialisation be used in an illustrative but limited way, in order to ease possible progression to further study.

GUIDANCE ON LEARNING AND TEACHING APPROACHES FOR THE UNIT

It is proposed that the learning experience at this level should be varied, to encourage enthusiasm for the subject and to stimulate and prepare candidates for independent study.

As the Unit has the same content as the Unit *Studying Human Society: The Sociological Approach* (Intermediate 2), it follows that in a bi-level class, while candidates will cover the same content, they will not be expected to master it in the same way. In other words, the same depth of knowledge and understanding or the same level of skills development will not be expected for Intermediate 1 candidates.

National Unit Specification: support notes (cont)

UNIT Studying Human Society: The Sociological Approach (Intermediate 1)

The Unit should be approached using a wide range of stimulus materials and teaching approaches. Candidates should be encouraged to draw on their own experiences, where appropriate, and should have access to resources such as audio-visual material, invited speakers, Internet, ICT and paper-based resources. Where appropriate, the material should be up to date and relevant to the Unit, the level of study and the interests of the candidates. For Intermediate 1 Sociology Units, it is recognised that the theories and methods covered in the Unit should be approached in a descriptive way, though some limited evaluation of the value and limitations of the theories and methods could be introduced.

The emphasis throughout should be on interactive learning, whether through whole class, small group, or individual activity. The Unit may be delivered on a flexible basis and may also be suitable for open learning and on-line delivery.

The Intermediate 1 Units have been written in such a way that bi-level teaching of the Units and the Intermediate 2 Course is possible, though centres should take into account that Intermediate 1 candidates would not require Course assessment preparation.

GUIDANCE ON APPROACHES TO ASSESSMENT FOR THE UNIT

The Evidence Requirements provide specific requirements for Unit assessment.

Outcomes and Performance Criteria should be assessed by means of a single holistic instrument of assessment lasting no more than one hour. The Unit assessment must ensure that *all* Outcomes and Performance Criteria are fully met.

Sampling of content in the Unit assessment is acceptable. In the Unit the sampling will be from all theories and research methods covered in learning and teaching. NAB materials provide assessment instruments and guidance on implementation. The questions in the NAB are restricted response in nature. Where centres wish to devise their own instruments of assessment, they should refer to the NAB to ensure a comparable standard. It is recommended that centre-devised instruments of assessment should be submitted to SQA for prior moderation.

Evidence should be gathered by means of a single assessment at the end of the Unit. Care should be taken to ensure that sufficient time is allowed for support and reassessment of candidates if required.

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* (SQA, September 2004).

National Unit Specification: Appendix to the statement of standards

UNIT Studying Human Society: The Sociological Approach (Intermediate 1)

NB: This Appendix is within the Statement of Standards, ie the mandatory requirements of the Unit.

Content and context

The sociological approach: an introduction

The Unit should begin with an introduction to common sense explanations and how sociology provides a studied response to such views on human behaviour and social life. This will provide candidates with an appropriate introduction to what is meant by sociology. Differences between common sense and sociological explanations must be covered:

- ◆ naturalistic assumptions
- ◆ individualistic assumptions
- ◆ sociological explanations

Examples of common sense explanations can be drawn from the candidates' every day lives.

Theories: features and description

Candidates must cover the following theories and relate these theories to relevant examples. Although all **four** theories are to be covered, only **two** theories require to be assessed for the Unit, as knowledge and understanding of the other theories will be inferred from a correct description of the theories chosen for Unit assessment sampling:

- (a) **Functionalism**
A range of features and appropriate key theorists will be studied.
- (b) **Marxism**
A range of features and appropriate key theorists will be studied.
- (c) **Feminism**
A range of features and appropriate key theorists will be studied.
- (d) **Social action**
A range of features and appropriate key theorists will be studied. At this level, it is *not* important to distinguish between the different types of social action theory.

Research methods

Candidates must cover the following **seven** primary and **three** secondary research methods as part of learning and teaching, though only **two** primary methods and **one** secondary method require to be assessed for the Unit knowledge and understanding of the other methods will be inferred from a correct description of the methods chosen for Unit assessment sampling.

National Unit Specification: Appendix to the statement of standards (cont)

UNIT Studying Human Society: The Sociological Approach (Intermediate 1)

(a) **Primary research methods**

The main features of the following primary research methods will be covered in learning and teaching for the Unit:

- ◆ questionnaires*
- ◆ structured interviews*
- ◆ unstructured interviews
- ◆ surveys*
- ◆ case studies
- ◆ participant observation
- ◆ non-participant observation

*NB: The term, survey, is often used instead of either postal questionnaires or structured interviews. It is appropriate to use the terms postal questionnaire and survey interchangeably. It is also possible to use the terms structured interview and survey interchangeably.

(b) **Secondary research methods**

The main features of the following secondary research methods will be covered in learning and teaching for the Unit:

- ◆ official statistics
- ◆ written evidence
- ◆ other visual evidence — eg film, video, television documentaries