



Course Report 2016

Subject	Sociology
Level	National 5

The statistics used in this report have been compiled before the completion of any Post Results Services.

This report provides information on the performance of candidates which it is hoped will be useful to teachers, lecturers and assessors in their preparation of candidates for future assessment. It is intended to be constructive and informative and to promote better understanding. It would be helpful to read this report in conjunction with the published assessment documents and marking instructions.

Section 1: Comments on the Assessment

Component 1: question paper

The question paper performed in line with expectations, and feedback from the marking team and from centres was positive. Course coverage and overall level of demand were both considered to be fair.

The question paper consists of three sections with a total of 50 marks available. There is one question for each section, subdivided with a variety of marks for each of these. Two of the sections are worth 15 marks and one worth 20 marks. The question worth 20 marks varies from year to year in terms of sampling the mandatory or optional topic.

Component 2: Assignment

The assignment is worth a total of 30 marks. The overall aim of the assignment is well understood now and the demands of the various tasks within the assignment are clear.

Feedback from the marking team was that the small changes made to the instructions from the previous year made the marking task easier and more robust.

Section 2: Comments on candidate performance

Areas in which candidates performed well

Component 1: question paper

Overall, candidates performed best in questions 2(b)i 1(a) and 2(b)ii. Almost all candidates finished the paper in the allocated time. The relationship between socialisation and identity formation is clearly well understood, and many candidates were able to introduce research evidence or other sources to enrich their answers.

There is also good evidence of candidates engaging with subcultures, though centres should guard against candidates who confuse hobbies or pastimes with subcultures. Candidates also seem to have a good grasp of research methods used in sociology and are able to display this when answering questions.

Component 2: assignment

Most candidates performed well in the assignment. Overall, candidates performed best in section A and section C. Candidates were good at following the rubric of the assignment and there were very few who did not complete the assignment within the word count. There was wide variety in the topics chosen for study in the assignment and clear evidence of different topics being chosen by candidates from the same centre.

A number of candidates pleasingly used a wide range of sources and research evidence to deepen their understanding of the topic being studied for the assignment.

Areas which candidates found demanding

Component 1: question paper

There were a number of questions which some candidates found demanding — in particular, questions 1(c), 3(a)i, 3(a)ii, 2(a)ii and 2(c). A number of candidates did not attempt question 3(a)ii and 2(a)ii.

There were some candidates who described action theories when asked to explain how individual actions influenced institutions. A few also confused diversity with cross-cultural studies. Many candidates struggled to apply sources and research evidence when required.

Component 2: assignment

The only section where a number of candidates struggled was section E, in particular using understanding of a relevant sociological perspective, theory or concept. Candidates should aim to use the theories to show their understanding of the topic in relation to their hypothesis.

Section 3: Advice for the preparation of future candidates

Component 1: question paper

Centres should ensure that all practitioners and candidates are familiar with the Course Assessment Specification. In particular, being able to describe the sociological significance of relationships amongst individuals, groups and institutions.

The definitions of different terms, particularly from the culture and identity section, also need to be better understood by candidates. A major area which some centres should address is the need for candidates to know about a social issue other than differential achievement in education.

Component 2: assignment

There is a requirement for assignments to be based on a sociological topic. Some topics are not appropriate for the assignment, and some others need to have a sociological understanding applied to them to make them appropriate.

There were a number of candidates who chose as their social issue the mandatory topic of differential achievement in education. By not investigating a different social issue, candidates may have disadvantaged themselves in the question paper by not having in-depth knowledge of a social issue other than the mandatory one.

Grade Boundary and Statistical information:

Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2015	92
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Number of resulted entries in 2016	259
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Statistical information: Performance of candidates

Distribution of Course awards including grade boundaries

Distribution of Course awards	%	Cum. %	Number of candidates	Lowest mark
Maximum Mark -				
A	11.6%	11.6%	30	56
B	16.6%	28.2%	43	48
C	25.1%	53.3%	65	40
D	10.8%	64.1%	28	36
No award	35.9%	-	93	-

General commentary on grade boundaries

- ◆ While SQA aims to set examinations and create marking instructions which will allow a competent candidate to score a minimum of 50% of the available marks (the notional C boundary) and a well prepared, very competent candidate to score at least 70% of the available marks (the notional A boundary), it is very challenging to get the standard on target every year, in every subject at every level.
- ◆ Each year, SQA therefore holds a grade boundary meeting for each subject at each level where it brings together all the information available (statistical and judgemental). The Principal Assessor and SQA Qualifications Manager meet with the relevant SQA Business Manager and Statistician to discuss the evidence and make decisions. The meetings are chaired by members of the management team at SQA.
- ◆ The grade boundaries can be adjusted downwards if there is evidence that the exam is more challenging than usual, allowing the pass rate to be unaffected by this circumstance.
- ◆ The grade boundaries can be adjusted upwards if there is evidence that the exam is less challenging than usual, allowing the pass rate to be unaffected by this circumstance.
- ◆ Where standards are comparable to previous years, similar grade boundaries are maintained.
- ◆ An exam paper at a particular level in a subject in one year tends to have a marginally different set of grade boundaries from exam papers in that subject at that level in other years. This is because the particular questions, and the mix of questions, are different. This is also the case for exams set in centres. If SQA has already altered a boundary in a particular year in, say, Higher Chemistry, this does not mean that centres should necessarily alter boundaries in their prelim exam in Higher Chemistry. The two are not that closely related, as they do not contain identical questions.
- ◆ SQA's main aim is to be fair to candidates across all subjects and all levels and maintain comparable standards across the years, even as arrangements evolve and change.