



Higher National Unit specification

General information

Unit title: Sociology A: Introduction to Sociology

Unit code: FK8R 34

Superclass: EE

Publication date: September 2015

Source: Scottish Qualifications Authority

Version: 03

Unit purpose

This Unit is designed to develop candidates' knowledge and understanding of the discipline of sociology. The Unit will explore the historical and intellectual foundations of sociology and the key features of the sociological imagination. Macro and micro models of society are explained and analytical skills are developed through the application of key sociological concepts and theories to examples that demonstrate the way sociologists understand the relationship between the individual and society.

It is intended for candidates who have a general interest in sociology as well as those who would use it as the basis for further study.

On successful completion of this Unit the candidate may progress to *Sociology B: Applying Sociological Theories and Studies to Sociological Topics*.

Outcomes

On successful completion of the Unit the candidate will be able to:

- 1 Explain the foundations of sociology.
- 2 Explain key sociological concepts and theories and apply them to an analysis of the relationship between the individual and society.

Credit points and level

1 Higher National Unit credit at SCQF level 7: (8 SCQF credit points at SCQF level 7)

Higher National Unit Specification: General information (cont)

Unit title: Sociology A: Introduction to Sociology

Recommended entry to the Unit

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

The previous study of Sociology through Units and National Qualifications at SCQF levels 5 or 6, or other similar qualifications, is desirable but not essential.

Ultimately, entry is at the discretion of the centre.

Core Skills

Opportunities to develop aspects of Core Skills are highlighted in the Support Notes for this Unit specification.

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

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.

Equality and inclusion

This Unit specification has been designed to ensure that there are no unnecessary barriers to learning or assessment. The individual needs of candidates should be taken into account when planning learning experiences, selecting assessment methods or considering alternative evidence.

Further advice can be found on our website www.sqa.org.uk/assessmentarrangements.

Higher National Unit specification: Statement of standards

Unit title: Sociology A: Introduction to Sociology

Unit Code:

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 SQA.

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 foundations of sociology.

Knowledge and/or Skills

- Historical and social context for the development of sociology.
- Key features that characterise a sociological imagination and sociological thinking.
- Macro and micro models of society.

Outcome 2

Explain key sociological concepts and theories and apply them to an analysis of the relationship between the individual and society.

Knowledge and/or Skills

- How sociologists understand the relationship between the individual and society.
- Sociological concepts applied to an analysis of the relationship between the individual and society.
- Sociological theories applied to an analysis of the relationship between the individual and society.

Note:

1. **Three** key sociological concepts are covered: **socialisation; social order; social stratification.**
2. **Three** different sociological theories are covered: **a theory of consensus; a theory of conflict; a theory of social action.**

Higher National Unit specification: Statement of standards (cont)

Unit title: Sociology A: Introduction to Sociology

Evidence Requirements for this Unit

Candidates will need to provide evidence to demonstrate their Knowledge and/or skills across all Outcomes by showing that they can:

- apply knowledge and skills to an explanation of the foundations of sociology and the application of key sociological concepts and theories to an analysis of the relationship between the individual and society

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. The foundations of sociology, three sociological concepts and three sociological theories will be assessed.

Response to the task set should include:

- a description of the historical and social contexts from which sociology developed
- an explanation of the key features that characterise a sociological imagination and sociological thinking
- an explanation of macro and micro models of society
- an explanation covering the application of three key sociological concepts (socialisation; social order; social stratification) to three theories

Each concept will be explained by the key features of one of the three theories so that all three theories and three concepts are covered in answering the question. For example, socialisation explained by a theory of social action, social order explained by a theory of consensus and social stratification explained by a theory of conflict, thereby, providing an analysis of the relationship between the individual and society. All three theories and three concepts must be covered in answering the question.

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



Higher National Unit Support Notes

Unit title: Sociology A: Introduction to Sociology

Unit Support Notes are offered as guidance and 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 prepares candidates for *Sociology B: Applying Sociological Theories and Studies to Sociological Topics*. The Unit can be taught as a free-standing Unit or as part of the HNC/D Social Sciences Group Awards.

The aim of this Unit is to provide an interesting and engaging introduction to sociology that will serve as a foundation for subsequent sociology Units.

The Unit starts with a look at the historical and social context for the development of sociology and sociological thinking; therefore, you should provide an outline of how political, industrial and scientific revolutions have had an influence on the development of sociology. This outline will show how sociology emerged from periods of dramatic social change in 18th, 19th and 20th century Europe and North America so the impact of social change such as modernisation, industrialisation and rationalisation could be covered. The link between social change and the emergence of sociology should be made clear. This historical and social context also offers the opportunity for candidates to make connections with other social science subjects they may be studying, eg history, politics, philosophy, psychology, economics and/or geography.

Key features that characterise a sociological imagination and sociological thinking should be covered to demonstrate that doing sociology involves a unique type of thinking and perspective. In this respect there are various views on the nature of sociological thinking that you can cover, but the work of C. Wright Mills' *Sociological Imagination* (1959) is clearly a good place to start. Mills' promise that sociology allows us to connect *history, structure* (society) and *biography* and his account of *personal troubles* as *public issues* provides an ideal framework for sociological thinking. The ideas expressed in Z. Bauman's *Thinking Sociologically* (2001) and P. Berger's *Invitation to Sociology* (1963) can also be good sources for developing sociological thinking.

An explanation of macro and micro models of society should allow candidates to develop their own sociological imagination by contrasting two key perspectives in sociology. The focus should be on candidates gaining an understanding of sociological perspectives by considering the relationship between the individual and society in terms of the macro/structural perspective and the micro/action perspective. In other words, the sociological perspective that sees individuals as born into an already existing society of constraining social structures is contrasted with the perspective that sees society as a product of individuals' everyday social actions and interactions.

The three key sociological concepts to be covered are: socialisation; social order; social stratification. Candidates should be encouraged to see the application of these concepts to the relationship between the individual and society by examining how human behaviour can be understood as learned behaviour that contributes to social order and the way society's structure and organisation constrains and controls individuals.

An effective way of doing this would be to explain these concepts within the context of macro and micro models of society and by linking all three concepts to the key features of each of the three theories. That is, each concept linked to a theory of consensus, to a theory of conflict and to a theory of social action. For assessment, this will allow for the concepts linked to theories to be changed each year. Candidates will **not** be expected to provide in-depth discussions on key features of each sociological theory, but enough detail to demonstrate an understanding of the theory's application. Specific theories could include structural functionalism; Marxism; neo-Marxism; feminism; social action; symbolic interactionism or ethnomethodology.

The process of socialisation and the internalisation of society's cultural norms and values could be explained at the macro level through linking to a theory of consensus e.g. in terms of a societal pre-requisite for value consensus and social integration, **or**, linking to a theory of conflict e.g. the way capitalist ideologies foster false class consciousness through socialisation. Conversely, from a micro level, socialisation can be explained in terms of the process whereby the social self-concept is formed through social interaction with significant and generalised others.

Social order could be explained at the macro level in terms of a consensus theory enculturation approach emphasising shared norms and values, **or**, linking to a theory of conflict which offers an approach which emphasises power and domination. Conversely, a more micro level approach in terms of a social action approach would see social order as result of everyday social interaction and adherence to the definition of the situation, social context and background expectancies.

Social stratification should be understood as a key concept in macro sociology in which various systems and forms of structured inequalities such as, slavery, feudalism, social class, gender, race and ethnicity, ageing and disability can be explored in terms of a theory of consensus which focuses on functional pre-requisites and integration to society's structure and organisation, **or**, linking to a theory of conflict e.g. Marxism which understands society as a class system stratified in terms of economic inequalities. Conversely, from a more micro perspective, the social consequences of social and cultural differences can be explored by considering the social processes behind stereotyping, mixed contacts and interactions, labelling, social stigma and the formation of a master status.

The relationship between the individual and society is clearly established when the fundamental idea that human beings are social beings is reinforced through the application of sociological concepts and theories. To show understanding, examples may be drawn from any aspect of social life.

It is recommended that key sociologists who have contributed to macro/structural and micro/action perspectives and the key sociological concepts and theories should be mentioned.

Guidance on approaches to delivery of this Unit

This Unit should be delivered in such a way as to provide the candidate with a foundational introduction to sociology, its historical development, mode of thinking, theoretical models and perspectives, key concepts and theories.

A varied and active learning approach would be beneficial where supported, independent and collaborative learning takes place and learners are encouraged to take a candidate-centred, participative and practical approach. Delivery methods such as, exposition, tutorial Q & A, debate, individual and group research tasks, presenting findings, VLE, use of digital tools and social media, film and visual images, close reading of sources are all possible approaches for gaining knowledge, understanding and skills development.

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

Guidance on approaches to assessment of this Unit

Evidence can be generated using different types of assessment. The following are suggestions only. There may be other methods that would be more suitable to candidates.

Centres are reminded that prior verification of centre-devised assessments would help to ensure that the national standard is being met. Where candidates experience a range of assessment methods, this helps them to develop different skills that should be transferable to work or further and higher education.

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 7 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 the poster and oral presentation, the time across both Outcomes, with all Evidence Requirements covered would be 10–12 minutes (not 10–12 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 completed by a review of the original work. Therefore, 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. Lecturers and tutors should use their professional judgement with regards to the number of words that can be added. 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**.

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 re-assessment. 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 10–12 minutes 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 a **reassessment**.

Opportunities for e-assessment

E-assessment may be appropriate for some assessments in this Unit. By e-assessment we mean assessment which is supported by Information and Communication Technology (ICT), such as e-testing or the use of e-portfolios or social software. Centres which wish to use e-assessment must ensure that the national standard is applied to all learner evidence and that conditions of assessment as specified in the Evidence Requirements are met, regardless of the mode of gathering evidence. The most up-to-date guidance on the use of e-assessment to support SQA's qualifications is available at www.sqa.org.uk/e-assessment.

Opportunities for developing Core and other essential skills

The delivery and assessment of this Unit may contribute towards the development of Core Skills in *Communication* 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 the Core Skill. Communicating the foundation of sociology, Mills' sociological imagination, an evaluation of macro and micro models of society and the application of sociological concepts require communication, critical and evaluation skills that easily fit 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.

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 on the foundation of sociology and the application of sociological concepts to human behaviour and society would be a complex topic. 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.

Thinking, analytical and critical skills could be developed by posing questions at appropriate points in the delivery, enabling discussion and promoting the need for candidates to take responsibility for learning by encouraging the development of research skills via the Internet or using text books.

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. Through applying a sociological imagination, learners will develop knowledge and understanding of their relationship to

society and the social world around them, so being encouraged to express a range of personal and informed opinions on this relationship 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 'A' 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.

History of changes to Unit

Version	Description of change	Date
02	Clarification of remediation and reassessment	16/10/12
03	Clarification of Evidence Requirements	Sept 2015

© Scottish Qualifications Authority [year]

This publication may be reproduced in whole or in part for educational purposes provided that no profit is derived from reproduction and that, if reproduced in part, the source is acknowledged.

Additional copies of this Unit specification can be purchased from the Scottish Qualifications Authority. Please contact the Business Development and Customer Support team, telephone 0303 333 0330.

General information for learners

Unit title: Sociology A: Introduction to Sociology

This section will help you decide whether this is the Unit for you by explaining what the Unit is about, what you should know or be able to do before you start, what you will need to do during the Unit and opportunities for further learning and employment.

This Unit aims to introduce you to the discipline of sociology by looking at the way the discipline emerged from a historical context of social change. You will learn about the sociological imagination and how to think sociologically by contrasting different models of society. Finally, you will begin to develop your own sociological imagination through applying key sociological concepts and key features from different sociological theories so that you develop a deeper understanding of the relationship between the individual and society. You will be encouraged to develop an enquiring and critical mind throughout the study of this Unit and it will be useful for you to start thinking about questions such as:

- What is society?
- How has society evolved and developed?
- How do you think sociologically?
- How do we know how to behave appropriately?
- How does society 'hold' together?
- What types of people do we find in society?
- Why is there inequality in society?
- How can sociological concepts and theories help us answer these types of questions?

At the end of the Unit you will undertake an assessment that will focus on explaining the foundations of sociology and the application of key sociological concepts and key features from different sociological theories to an analysis of the relationship between the individual and society. 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 1500 words or a set of structured questions with an expected response of approximately 1500 words or an oral presentation of 10-12 minutes or a poster exhibition of 10-12 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 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.