Higher National Unit specification

General information

Unit title: Sociology B: Applying Sociological Theories and Studies to Sociological Topics

Unit code: FK8T 34

Superclass:	EE
Publication date:	September 2015
Source:	Scottish Qualifications Authority
Version:	04

Unit purpose

This Unit builds upon candidates' knowledge and understanding of sociological thinking, perspectives, concepts and theories. The Unit will enable candidates to analyse and evaluate sociological theories and apply this information to a selected range of sociological topics. This Unit is intended for candidates who wish to develop their knowledge and understanding of sociology and for those who wish to use it as the basis for further study.

On successful completion of this Unit the candidate may progress to *Sociology C: Analysing and Evaluating Sociological Debates*

Outcomes

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

1. Explain key contributions of sociological theories and studies to different sociological topics

2. Evaluate key contributions of sociological theories and studies to different sociological topics

Credit points and level

2 Higher National Unit credit(s) at SCQF level 7: (16 SCQF credit points at SCQF level 7)

Higher National Unit Specification: General information (cont)

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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 and 7, or other similar qualifications, is desirable but not essential. Candidates would benefit from achievement of HN Unit *Sociology A: Introduction to Sociology.*

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.

The Assessment Support Pack (ASP) for this unit provides assessment and marking guidelines that exemplify the national standard for achievement. It is a valid, reliable and practicable assessment. Centres wishing to develop their own assessments should refer to the ASP to ensure a comparable standard. A list of existing ASPs is available to download from SQA's website (http://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/46233.2769.html).

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 learners 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 B: Applying Sociological Theories and Studies to Sociological Topics

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. Learners 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 key contributions of sociological theories and studies to different sociological topics.

Knowledge and/or Skills

- Three sociological topics
- Three relevant sociological theories contrasted and applied to each topic
- Three relevant sociological studies appropriate to each sociological topic

Outcome 2

Evaluate key contributions of sociological theories and studies to different sociological topics.

Knowledge and/or Skills

- Three sociological topics
- Sociological theories
- Sociological studies that support or refute theories

Note: Topics chosen should come from topics listed in the support notes. Studies refer to any acceptable, relevant and academically appropriate sociological or social science writing or communication.

Higher National Unit specification: Statement of standards (cont)

Unit title: Sociology B: Applying Sociological Theories and Studies to Sociological Topics

Evidence Requirements

Candidates will need to provide evidence to demonstrate their Knowledge and/or Skills by showing that they can, for each assessment question:

- apply at least **three** contrasting sociological theories and **three** related sociological studies to **one** topic for the open-book assessment; apply **two** contrasting theories and **two** related sociological studies to **one** topic for the closed-book assessment

- explain the similarities and differences between at least **three** contrasting sociological theories in relation to **one** topic for the open-book assessment; explain the similarities and differences between only **two** contrasting theories in relation to **one** topic for the closed-book assessment

- produce a holistic evaluation covering **three** studies and **three** contrasting theories where the studies either support or refute the theories in relation to **one** topic in the open-book assessment; and a holistic evaluation of **two** sociological studies and **two** contrasting theories where the studies either support or refute the theories in relation to **one** topic in the closed-book assessment

Both Outcomes will be assessed within the closed-book assessment and the open-book assessment. The candidate will study three topic areas in relation to at least three theories and studies, but only two topics will be selected for assessment purposes. One topic will be assessed within the closed-book exercise and one topic will be assessed within the open-book exercise.

Within the closed-book assessment, the Evidence Requirements for Outcomes 1 and 2 are assessed on a basis of sampling. Within the open-book assessment, candidates must cover three theories and three studies in relation to one topic.

Three or more theories and **three** or more studies influenced or related to these theories must be taught and available for assessment. However, candidates need only discuss **two** theories and **two** studies supporting or refuting the chosen theories for **one** topic within the closed-book exercise. **The sample chosen for assessment purposes must change each year.**

In the open-book assessment, regardless of the assessment method chosen, the candidate must submit a bibliography presented in a standard referencing format, such as Harvard.

Assessment Guidelines

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.

Both Outcome 1 and Outcome 2 should be assessed holistically for each assessment.

In summary, candidates will undertake **two** assessments each testing both Outcomes.

The assessor should determine which topic should be used for the open-book assessment and which one of the other two topics should be sampled for the closed-book assessment. The part of the Unit that will be assessed by a closed-book assessment means candidates should be assessed without the use of notes, textbooks, VLE or other materials in a supervised setting.

This assessment could take the form of a set of unseen structured questions requiring a response of approximately 1000 words across all questions *or* an essay, also requiring approximately 1000 words *or* an oral response to set questions requiring the candidate to respond in sustained detail for approximately 8 minutes *or* an oral presentation of approximately 8 minutes duration *or* another method decided by the centre. As this is a closed-book assessment, it would not be appropriate for candidates to use visual aids (such as PowerPoint presentations or posters) in the oral presentation, rather it would be sustained presentation without aid of notes. Broad guidance on the area to be assessed will be given one week prior to the assessment date. It is likely that if it is a written assessment it will take between 90 minutes and two hours to complete.

The part of the Unit that will be assessed by an open-book assessment means that candidates will be allowed access to materials (eg text books, notes, VLE).
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 an 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 the candidate covers Knowledge and/or Skills of applying sociological theories to a sociological topic in a poster and covers the contribution of sociological studies to the topic in a presentation on the same occasion. Where this is the case, the total time for all aspects would be 15 minutes approximately (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 7 in each type of task.

Higher National Unit Support Notes

Unit title: Sociology B: Applying Sociological Theories and Studies to Sociological Topics

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 80 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 C: Analysing and Evaluating Sociological Debates.* 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 introduce sociological theories and studies and show their relevance by applying and then evaluating their contribution to different sociological topics.

Candidates should be introduced to theories and studies in **three** different topic areas in order to broaden and deepen sociological understanding, though only two topics will be made available for assessment. The aim of the Unit is to offer candidates and centres as much flexibility as possible in terms of sociological topics and the debates and issues associated with them. The application of at least **three** theories and at least **three** studies to each of the **three** topics chosen from the list below will allow substantial scope for broadening and/or deepening sociological understanding of each of the chosen topics.

NB: Candidates may use different combinations of theories and studies for each topic, as appropriate.

In order to allow as much choice and flexibility as possible a list of topics is provided. Choices can reflect individual interests and specialism and which also satisfy the requirements of higher education institutions with which articulation is possible.

The topic areas for the Unit cover sociological themes such as social difference and social stratification, social institutions and modern living:

Social Class
Gender
Race and Ethnicity
Poverty and Social Exclusion
Health and Medicine
Changing World of Work and Organisations
Schooling and Education
Mass Media
Families, Households and Relationships
Crime and Deviance.

N.B. It is not expected that each topic is covered in its entirety and subsections or a focus on particular areas of the topic is acceptable as long as coverage is extensive enough for assessment purposes. Application of a Scottish dimension to any of the above topics could be explored, where appropriate.

Guidance on approaches to delivery of this Unit

This Unit should be delivered in such a way as to provide the candidate with an introduction to sociological theories and studies and show their relevance by applying and then evaluating their contribution to different sociological topics.

A varied and active learning approach would be beneficial where supported, independent and collaborative learning takes place and candidates 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.

The HN Unit *Sociology B: Applying Sociological Theories and Studies to Sociological Topics* covers a range of sociological theories and studies. For both Outcome 1 and Outcome 2, at least three key theories and at least three studies that either support or refute the arguments raised by these theories in each of three topics must be taught and available for assessment, though only two topics will be assessed. The assessment model is intended to build upon the knowledge and understanding gained from the HN Unit *Sociology A: Introduction to Sociology,* by applying sociological theories to specific topics.

For assessment purposes, candidates are required to cover three theories and three studies for the topic covered in the open-book assessment, but are only required to cover two theories and two supporting studies for the topic covered in the closed-book assessment. Candidates may use different combinations of theories and studies for each topic, as appropriate.

Theories can be drawn from 'classical' sociological theory, such as, functionalism, Marxism, Weberianism, social action theories such as symbolic interactionism, or from contemporary sociological theories such as postmodernism, cultural studies, post-structuralism and feminism.

Once the topics have been chosen, it may be appropriate to set the open-book assessment on the first topic covered, thus setting the closed-book assessment on one of the other two topics. Alternatively, the first two topics may be covered in learning and teaching and then the closed-book assessment may be set on one of the two topics. The open-book assessment could then be set as an end of Unit assessment.

Each assessment should invite candidates to discuss the questions in the context of contrasting theoretical perspectives. The candidate has some flexibility in determining the theoretical approaches that they wish to use. They could introduce additional theories as part of their analysis and evaluation, if they thought it would enhance their discussion.

Relevant studies should be used to provide evidence in support or refutation of the perspectives being used to discuss the topic. A relevant study refers to any acceptable, relevant and academically appropriate sociological or social scientific writing or communication. At least one study to support or refute each of the main theories discussed will be used, though candidates may also want to introduce further studies to support or refute any additional theories that they may introduce. Effective application of the theories to the topic(s) and the studies to support or refute each of the theories would demonstrate that candidates have understood both the topic(s) and the theoretical approaches to the topic(s).

Importantly, candidates should provide evidence of having engaged with debates in sociology; that they do so on the basis of sociological literature (citing theorists, authors,

studies, dates); and that they demonstrate reasonably high level skills of analysis and evaluation.

The Unit is aimed not just at developing skills that focus on explaining and evaluating, but also at introducing candidates to a reasonably extensive body of knowledge. Three topics will be covered in a notional 80 hours, giving centres approximately 26 hours of learning and teaching time per topic. Written assessment produced outside of class contact time will increase the range of material that could be covered.

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.

Tutors should make candidates aware of the importance of the judicious selection of appropriate academic sources in researching the topics. They should be encouraged to choose academic sources rather than generic search engines, to enable them to be more confident of information and to be more equipped to progress to SCQF level 8 Units or further study.

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 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 a partial write-up in presence of the assessor or by using an anti-plagiarism tool, such as Turnitin or SafeAssign, which checks Internet sites.

Remediation of the closed-book assessment could be done by oral clarification for minor omissions or to clarify minor detail. If addition of information is required this can be added, as long as it is approximately 100 words or less per outcome. Otherwise, a different assessment instrument would be required to be completed in its entirety and this would be classed as a **reassessment.**

Remediation of the open-book assessment 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 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 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 of *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 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 'B' 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 statements	07/11/12
03	Time for closed book assessment extended to two hours	08/05/13
04	Clarification of evidence requirements for Outcome 2	Sept 2015

General information for learners

Unit title: Sociology B: Applying Sociological Theories and Studies to Sociological Topics

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 allows you to develop your sociological imagination and sociological understanding of modern society by applying sociological theories and studies to sociological topics.

Part of the Unit will be assessed by a closed-book assessment, which means you will be assessed without the use of notes, textbooks, VLE or other materials in a supervised setting. This could take the form of a set of unseen structured questions requiring a response of approximately 1000 words across all questions *or* an essay, also requiring approximately 1000 words *or* an oral response to set questions requiring you to respond in sustained detail for approximately 8 minutes *or* an oral presentation of approximately 8 minutes duration *or* another method decided by your centre. Your centre will inform you of the chosen method in good time. You will know the broad area to be assessed one week prior to the assessment date. It is likely that if it is a written assessment it will take between 90 minutes and two hours to complete.

You will also be assessed by an open-book assessment on one of the topics studied in the Unit. This means that you will be allowed access to materials (eg text books, notes, VLE). The open-book assessment will be handed out to be completed at a date specified by your lecturer. It 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 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 should be completed and submitted as a written report *or* an oral presentation based on a prescribed format given by your lecturer. It is expected that a written response will be approximately 2,000 words and an oral presentation would be approximately 15 minutes in duration.

As you progress through the Unit material, you will be encouraged to develop the Core Skills of *Communication* at SCQF level 6, *Working with Others* 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.