



## National Unit specification: general information

**Unit title:** Working with Communities: Sociological Perspectives  
(SCQF level 6)

**Unit code:** H1MG 12

**Superclass:** EE

**Publication date:** June 2012

**Source:** Scottish Qualifications Authority

**Version:** 01

## Summary

This Unit is designed to introduce candidates to sociology and to demonstrate how sociology can help develop an understanding of local communities. Candidates will be introduced to the ways in which sociological concepts and perspectives contribute to the understanding of local communities.

The Unit is suitable for candidates who wish to progress to employment in the community or to move on to further study.

## Outcomes

- 1 Explain the contribution sociology makes to understanding local communities.
- 2 Explain features of sociological theories and social issues.

## Recommended entry

Entry is at the discretion of the centre, but a good standard of communication skills would be desirable. It would also be beneficial for candidates to have some experience of working in communities either in employment or through volunteering.

## Credit points and level

1 National Unit credit at SCQF level 6: (6 SCQF credit points at SCQF level 6\*)

*\*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.*

## **General information (cont)**

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### **Core Skills**

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

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

## **National Unit specification: statement of standards**

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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.

### **Outcome 1**

Explain the contribution sociology makes to understanding local communities.

#### **Performance Criteria**

- (a) Explain the difference between sociological and common-sense explanations.
- (b) Describe the influence of the main agents of socialisation.

### **Outcome 2**

Explain features of sociological theories and social issues.

#### **Performance Criteria**

- (a) Identify and describe key features of one sociological theory.
- (b) Describe the main features of a social issue that may impact on a local community.

## **National Unit specification: statement of standards (cont)**

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### **Evidence Requirements for this Unit**

Evidence is required to demonstrate that candidates have achieved all Outcomes and Performance Criteria.

#### **Outcome 1**

Candidates are required to outline two agents of socialisation. Centres should compile assessments which sample all the agents of socialisation so that over a period of time all agents are assessed. Each assessment will allow candidates to generate evidence which:

- ◆ explains how sociological explanations differ from common-sense explanations
- ◆ outlines the influence of two main agents of socialisation from: family, education, mass media, work, peers and religion.

#### **Outcome 2**

Each assessment will allow candidates to generate evidence which:

- ◆ correctly identifies and describes key features of one sociological theory
- ◆ describes the main features of one social issue that may impact on a local community; Social issues may include unemployment, housing, poverty, crime, discrimination, gender, etc.

## National Unit specification: support notes

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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 Unit is designed to give students a basic introduction to sociology and to how it might assist them in understanding their own communities and the communities within which they work or volunteer. The Unit will also be helpful for candidates progressing to the HNC Working with Communities.

#### Outcome 1

It is important that candidates understand that the study of societies is based on research, the data gathered is subsequently analysed and factually based conclusions are drawn. These conclusions differ from common sense assumptions that do not recognise the importance of wider social forces and naturalistic assumptions that don't recognise that behaviour is primarily social (learned) not biological (innate). Common sense is really just the use of good judgment. Sociological explanations define mass behaviour, and the deviance these masses display. Good judgment in this nation is not necessarily viewed as good judgment in other parts of the world.

#### Socialisation

Candidates should be introduced to the socialisation process and to the concept that the individual is influenced by social norms and pressures. The vast majority of us learn to live in our own society and to participate in it effectively. How do we manage to achieve the skills necessary to participate? Are we born with them or do we acquire them through some process or experience? To learn the culture of society we undergo a process called **socialisation**. Socialisation is the process of learning and accepting the **norms** and **values** of a group and of developing our own **role** within it. Sociologists identify what are referred to as '**agents of socialisation**'. These include:

- ◆ **The Family.** The family is our first source in the process of socialisation. The family is where, as children, we are first exposed to the culture — values, norms, beliefs, language, attitudes, manners, etc — of society. Family members play an important part in the **primary socialisation** process.
- ◆ **Education.** When children enter the world of **education** their socialisation continues as they are introduced to new surroundings and people. For the first time they will be required to do what they are told by strangers and their day will be much more organised. They have entered a much more disciplined world where reward (praise, certificates, etc) and sanctions (punishment exercises, expulsion, etc) play an important part. The children are being prepared, according to some sociologists, to accept reward and sanctions as preparation for the world of work.

## National Unit specification: support notes (cont)

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- ◆ **Religion.** Religion is often seen as transmitting the 'belief system' of a society. That belief system teaches us, it is claimed, what is morally acceptable behaviour — that is what is considered to be the difference between 'right' and 'wrong'. Religion is also considered important at times of 'rites of passage', ie baptism, marriage, funerals etc.
- ◆ **Peer Group.** It is during interaction with other children that we learn to cooperate with others. We learn that it is often necessary to accept rules if we are to be members of a group.
- ◆ **World of Work.** This is when, by and large, we enter the world of adulthood and have to learn a new set of rules and behaviour that will make us acceptable to the group. On changing jobs we may have to relearn the rules, but the socialisation process has prepared us for such a possibility.
- ◆ **The Media.** Most of are exposed to some form of the media. We will read, watch television or listen to the radio and we will be exposed to news, opinions, advertising etc. These reflect and reinforce the culture of society and are a way of transmitting it to us. The media is often accused of transmitting a culture which only reflects what is happening in one class in a society.

Socialisation is an on-going process that starts when we are born and continues until we die.

### Outcome 2

Candidates should be introduced to a minimum of four perspectives. The perspectives taught are likely to include:

#### Functionalism

Functionalists see the behaviour in society as being structured and they contend that all of the component parts that make up this structure are there because they play an important role. An analogy often used by functionalists is that society is like a machine (mechanical analogy) or like the human body (biological analogy). All of the parts that make up society (institutions and systems, etc) perform a function that interacts with functions of other parts to produce a working society. The norms and values that underpin this working system are accepted by everyone (value consensus) but if they were not accepted they would be changed to ensure integration. The shared values in a society are what enable it to function in an orderly fashion.

## National Unit specification: support notes (cont)

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### Key features:

- ◆ Assumes everyone shares the same norms and values
- ◆ Emphasises harmony, integration and stability
- ◆ Examines social structures
- ◆ Identifies that functional prerequisites exist for the survival of society

### Strengths:

- ◆ Takes a holistic approach when studying society
- ◆ Looks at social structure when analysing behaviour
- ◆ Good at explaining continuity

### Weaknesses:

- ◆ Finds it difficult to explain conflict and change
- ◆ Assumes that we all share the same norms and values, ie value consensus
- ◆ Does not take account of individual or group interaction

### Marxism

Marxism is a conflict perspective and, like functionalism, takes a structural approach when analysing behaviour. Where it differs from functionalism is that it focuses on conflict between competing groups. Marxists believe that within the capitalist system conflict is inevitable. The competing groups are those that own the means of production (bourgeoisie) and those that do not (proletariat). Marx argued that wealth is produced by labour and the more capitalists took as profit the less that was left for the benefit of the workers (wealth producers). Marxists argue that this contradiction is the inevitable source of conflict between employer and employee. Therefore, according to Marxists, this conflict existed because people were allowed to own property, which in turn created a class system that needed to be sustained. Exploitation and oppression would result.

### Key features:

- ◆ Constant struggle for power between groups
- ◆ Sees society as a whole with an infrastructure and superstructure
- ◆ Society characterised by conflict
- ◆ Conflict and inequality arise from the unequal distribution of production and power

### Strengths:

- ◆ Takes a whole society approach
- ◆ Recognises the power interests of different groups in society
- ◆ Good at explaining conflict and change in society

## National Unit specification: support notes (cont)

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### Weaknesses

- ◆ Finds it difficult to explain why certain aspects of societies remain unchanged
- ◆ Ignores individuals and groups in society

### Feminism

There are various versions of feminism but all share the same basic idea that society is structured in such a way that women are seen as second class. In common with Marxists they tend to agree that society is split into different groups with one group being oppressed by the other group. The division in the case of feminism is between men and women and the exploitation that takes place is that of women by men. They also agree that, until recently, women were ignored in the discipline of sociology.

**Marxist feminists** and **radical feminists** believe society is **patriarchal**, meaning dominated by men and they seek to change the system of patriarchy and end male dominance.

**Difference feminists**, on the other hand, do not see all women as being equally oppressed and they categorise women into various groups where some are oppressed and disadvantaged. They do not believe that all men oppress their wives or that all women are disadvantaged in the workplace. They emphasise differences between class background and ethnic groups. Feminists focus on **gender inequalities** and try to explain differences between the way men and women are perceived and treated.

### Key features:

- ◆ Highlights effect of male dominated societies
- ◆ Has shown that gender issues did not feature in sociological studies
- ◆ Has raised gender issues

### Strengths:

- ◆ Raised the awareness of gender issues
- ◆ Encouraged sociologists to include gender in research
- ◆ Improved the representation of half the population

### Weaknesses

- ◆ Has been accused of too narrow an outlook
- ◆ Ignores ethnicity as a social category



## National Unit specification: support notes (cont)

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### Interactionism

Interactionism is concerned with the interaction between individuals. In contrast to the consensus and conflict theories it operates at the micro-sociological level. This is because it is mainly concerned with the behaviour of individuals. To fully understand behaviour in society it is necessary to understand the action of individuals and their understanding of those actions. While consensus and conflict theories see society as shaping individuals, Interactionists see the individuals as shaping society.

#### Key features:

- ◆ Understands society in terms of the individuals and groups who live in it
- ◆ The meaning and interpretation attached to social action by the social actors undertaking social roles are important
- ◆ Stresses the importance of human agency

#### Strengths:

- ◆ Good at explaining small scale interaction
- ◆ Emphasises the role of human agency
- ◆ Good at explaining meaning and interpretation

#### Weaknesses:

- ◆ Wider social structures and processes excluded
- ◆ Subjective
- ◆ Does not always look for origins of meaning and interpretation

The above are only brief introductions to the perspectives and are included to give an indication of the level at which the Unit should be taught. Only a basic introduction is required.

Candidates should be encouraged to explore a range of social issues and how they may impinge on communities. The explanations offered by the perspectives should also be explored, including their strengths and weaknesses. Candidates should be introduced to linking sociological theories to social issues although this need not be assessed.

## **National Unit specification: support notes (cont)**

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### **Guidance on learning and teaching approaches for this Unit**

In delivering this Unit there should be a balance between teacher/lecturer presentation and candidate centred learning. It is important that candidates not only understand the concepts, perspectives and social issues which are identified in this Unit but that they can also apply them to given situations.

The content of this Unit can be taught using a variety of methods such as:

- ◆ Small group exercises
- ◆ Group discussion
- ◆ Case studies
- ◆ Worksheets
- ◆ Individual or group research
- ◆ Videos
- ◆ Lectures
- ◆ Use of Information and Computing Technology (ICT) such as appropriate and relevant websites

Teachers/lecturers and candidates are encouraged to use the internet, the news media and professional journals as sources of current examples of how social issues impact on life chances and of how perspectives can offer explanations.

Candidates should be encouraged to take some responsibility for their own learning to improve their research skills and to raise their confidence.

### **Guidance on approaches to assessment for this Unit**

An appropriate instrument of assessment for both Outcomes would be restricted response questions. The candidate's responses for each Outcome should be no more than 750 words or equivalent.

At the centre's discretion the Outcomes can be assessed together or separately. As candidates will increase their knowledge, understanding and skills throughout their study, assessment should take place towards the end of the Unit. Where candidates are comfortable using ICT the use of e-assessment should be considered, especially for candidates who lack confidence when using writing skills. Conditions should be in place to ensure that the requirements of the Unit are met and that the assessment submitted is the work of the candidate.

## **National Unit specification: support notes (cont)**

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### **Opportunities for the use of 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 candidate evidence and that conditions of assessment as specified in the Evidence Requirements are met, regardless of the mode of gathering evidence. Further advice is available in *SQA Guidelines on Online Assessment for Further Education (AA1641, March 2003)*, *SQA Guidelines on e-assessment for Schools (BD2625, June 2005)*.

### **Opportunities for developing Core Skills**

In this Unit candidates will be involved in research. There may be opportunities for candidates to work with others which would enable them to develop effective Communication and interpersonal skills. If the candidate uses a computer while undertaking any part of this Unit, they will have the opportunity to develop *Information and Communication Technology* and research skills.

### **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](http://www.sqa.org.uk/assessmentarrangements)

## History of changes to Unit

Version	Description of change	Date

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