

Sociology: Human Society

SCQF: level 5 (6 SCQF credit points)

Unit code: J2DB 75

Unit outline

The general aim of this Unit is to develop learners' understanding of the sociological approach to studying human societies. Learners will investigate the research methods used in sociology, and will describe the relationships that exist amongst individuals, groups and institutions from different sociological perspectives.

Learners who complete this Unit will be able to:

- 1 Explain the sociological approach to understanding society
- 2 Explain relationships amongst individuals, groups and institutions

This Unit available as a free-standing Unit. The Unit Specification should be read in conjunction with the *Unit Support Notes*, which provide advice and guidance on delivery, assessment approaches and development of skills for learning, skills for life and skills for work. Exemplification of the standards in this Unit is given in *Unit Assessment Support*.

Recommended entry

Entry to this Unit is at the discretion of the centre. However, learners would normally be expected to have attained the skills, knowledge and understanding required by one or more of the following or equivalent qualifications and/or experience:

- ◆ National 4 People and Society Course or relevant component Units
- ◆ National 4 Modern Studies Course or relevant component Units

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. For further information, please refer to the *Unit Support Notes*.

Standards

Outcomes and Assessment Standards

Outcome 1

The learner will:

- 1 Explain the sociological approach to understanding society by:**
 - 1.1 Distinguishing between common-sense and sociological explanations of social behaviour
 - 1.2 Describing basic features and one advantage and one disadvantage of two different research methods that tend to generate quantitative data
 - 1.3 Describing basic features and one advantage and one disadvantage of two different research methods that tend to generate qualitative data
 - 1.4 Selecting research methods favoured by sociologists that adopt structural and action perspectives

Outcome 2

The learner will:

- 2 Explain relationships amongst individuals, groups and institutions by:**
 - 2.1 Explaining the structural perspective, using the concept of structure
 - 2.2 Explaining the action perspective, using the concept of social action
 - 2.3 Describing two differences between structural and action perspectives

Evidence Requirements for the Unit

Assessors should use their professional judgement, subject knowledge and experience, and understanding of their learners, to determine the most appropriate ways to generate evidence and the conditions and contexts in which they are used.

Exemplification of assessment is provided in *Unit Assessment Support*. Advice and guidance on possible approaches to assessment is provided in the *Unit Support Notes*.

Assessment standard thresholds

If a candidate successfully meets the requirements of the specified number of Assessment Standards they will be judged to have passed the Unit overall and no further re-assessment will be required.

The specific requirements for this Unit is as follows:

- ◆ Candidates do not need to be re-assessed for Assessment Standard 1.1 if they do not meet the requirements.

It should be noted that there will still be the requirement for candidates to be given the opportunity to meet all Assessment Standards. The above threshold has been put in place to reduce the volume of re-assessment where that is required.

Development of skills for learning, skills for life and skills for work

It is expected that learners will develop broad, generic skills through this Unit. The skills that learners will be expected to improve on and develop through the Unit are based on SQA's *Skills Framework: Skills for Learning, Skills for Life and Skills for Work* and are drawn from the main skills areas listed below. These must be built into the Unit where there are appropriate opportunities.

1 Literacy

1.3 Listening and talking

3 Health and wellbeing

3.1 Personal learning

4 Employability, enterprise and citizenship

4.6 Citizenship

5 Thinking skills

5.3 Applying

5.4 Analysing and evaluating

Amplification of these is given in SQA's *Skills Framework: Skills for Learning, Skills for Life and Skills for Work*. The level of these skills should be at the same SCQF level as the Unit and be consistent with the SCQF level descriptor. Further information on building in skills for learning, skills for life and skills for work is given in the *Unit Support Notes*.

Appendix: Unit support notes

Introduction

These support notes are not mandatory. They provide advice and guidance on approaches to delivering and assessing this Unit. They are intended for teachers and lecturers who are delivering this Unit. They should be read in conjunction with:

- ◆ the *Unit Specification*
- ◆ the *Unit Assessment Support packs*

Developing skills, knowledge and understanding

Teachers and lecturers are free to select the skills, knowledge, understanding and contexts which are most appropriate for delivery in their centres.

Approaches to learning, teaching and assessment

Overarching guidance

A wide variety of learning and teaching approaches can be used to deliver this Unit. The Unit Support Notes provide advice and guidance and some examples of approaches that could be used. At all times, teachers/lecturers should provide opportunities for personalisation and choice to ensure that learning is relevant and motivating. Where possible, learning should be relevant to the learners' domestic and everyday life, their overall learning programme and/or work and leisure.

Sequencing and timing

The *Human Society* Unit consists of two Outcomes which can be taught and assessed in a variety of ways. Outcome 1 offers an introduction to sociology as a discipline and so may be the best place to start. Both Outcomes can be delivered within the time allowed for the study of the Unit, with ample time for exemplification. Alternatively a holistic approach may be taken by explaining research methods favoured by different perspectives.

Possible approaches to learning and teaching

A rich and supportive learning environment should be provided to enable learners to achieve the best they can. This could include approaches which include:

- ◆ Development of critical thinking skills
- ◆ Asking learners to explain or show their thinking
- ◆ Collaborative and independent learning
- ◆ Discussion around new concepts and how they can be applied
- ◆ Using technology where appropriate
- ◆ Learners planning and/or participating in real-life activities involving sociological research methods

Examples of learning and teaching contexts and opportunities

Explain the sociological approach to understanding society

This should challenge 'common-sense' or personal opinion, both of which construct explanations of human behaviour in terms of naturalistic and/or individualistic assumptions. This could be done through exemplification, which should come from contexts familiar to the learner. Simple definitions of naturalistic and individualistic explanations should be given.

Common-sense and sociological approaches can be exemplified using crime/deviance or unemployment/poverty or other relevant issues. A common-sense approach could focus on popular media examples or anecdotal 'evidence' of personal experience. A sociological approach would consider statistical evidence, research evidence, and trends and changes over time. Using a common-sense approach, unemployment and poverty could be seen as inevitable or due to individual faults; though a sociological approach could look at national and international economic policies and the relative power of those who take decisions which result in increased unemployment and poverty for others.

This will involve outlining what is meant by sociology as a study of society; and ways in which sociologists attempt to carry out this work.

This Outcome is intended to establish the foundations of understanding in relation to sociological information and to distinguish it from 'common-sense' or personal opinion.

The quantitative research methods which may be considered could include: postal questionnaires; structured interviews, surveys and official statistics. The advantages and disadvantages should relate to the likelihood of the research method to produce reliable and valid results considering time, cost, ease, sample size, depth, breadth or nature of enquiry.

The qualitative research methods considered could include: unstructured interviews, case studies, visual images such as documentaries, participant and non participant observation. The advantages and disadvantages should relate to the likelihood of the research method to produce reliable and valid results considering time, cost, ease, sample size, depth, breadth or nature of enquiry.

Research methods are crucial to an understanding of the sociological approach, and should be introduced as part of the examination of the nature of sociology. Learners should be aware that different sociological perspectives may favour different research methods. The quantitative methods should be regarded individually and by looking at the commonality of empirical research. Although surveys can often be viewed as synonymous with postal questionnaires and structured interviews, they can be distinct and form a separate method, particularly when the subjects do not need to respond, such as behavioural analysis in a street which covertly records movement, choices and other behaviour. Qualitative methods are varied and there are many examples. Documentaries could be viewed and the various ways of conducting unstructured or semi-structured interviews, such as focus groups. Experiential learning by conducting mock research could be utilised.

Explain relationships amongst individuals, groups and institutions Consideration of the structural perspective should introduce the ways of examining and explaining human social behaviour which emphasise the importance of structures and institutions in shaping society and influencing behaviour. This should be exemplified using both consensual contexts which show how structures can be seen as working to benefit society as a whole; and conflicting contexts which show how structures can be used to the detriment of groups in society.

Consideration of the action perspective should introduce the ways of examining and explaining human social behaviour which emphasise the importance of individual actions in shaping society and institutions. This should be exemplified by looking at the development of the Action perspective and relating it to contemporary social settings. It would normally be expected that considerable learning and teaching will have taken place prior to the assessment evidence being collected. Learners should have successfully completed tasks and exercises of a similar demand to those in the assessment. In other words, the assessor must be confident that the learner is ready for, and can achieve, the assessment.

Assessment could be done as part of the learning and teaching programme or as a discrete activity. The assessment could be carried out as a single event, or it may be broken up into smaller, more manageable chunks. In this case care must be taken to avoid duplication of evidence and potential over-assessment.

Suggested assessment activities could include:

- ◆ Specific assessment tasks
- ◆ Practical Assignment
- ◆ Practical Activities
- ◆ Oral questioning using a recording or transcript as evidence
- ◆ Observation using an observation checklist or video recording as evidence
- ◆ Learning and teaching activities which provide naturally occurring opportunities for assessment

It is recommended that all evidence generated by the learner is kept together and in a secure place. This can be done by creating and providing the learner with a workbook or portfolio. Where possible, opportunities to collect and store evidence electronically could be used.

Opportunities for extension, revision and consolidation of skills and knowledge should be built into this Unit; how this is organised will depend on the needs of the learners and the teaching approach used.

Assessment of this Unit will focus on establishing the learner's understanding of the Outcomes. Specifically this would mean:

- ◆ Describing common-sense approaches, explaining the sociological approach and distinguishing between the two. This could be accomplished by using a short scenario paragraph from which learners need to identify the different approaches, going into more depth to explain the sociological approach.
- ◆ Describing the features of quantitative and qualitative research methods. Giving advantages and disadvantages of named (studied) research methods. This could include naming a method and asking what sort of data it tended to produce.
- ◆ Explaining Structural and Action perspectives. This could be accomplished by using a short scenario paragraph from which learners use Sociological perspective to explain the scenario.

Combining assessment within Units

Centres may deliver the learning and teaching of the unit in a holistic, integrated fashion. The two Outcomes in this Unit encompass a set of coherent Assessment Standards designed to make it possible to assess learning as a whole. A holistic approach to assessment will enrich the assessment process for the learner, avoid duplication of assessment, provide more time for learning and teaching and allow centres to manage the assessment process more efficiently. Evidence may be therefore be gathered for the Unit as a whole through one assessment and a single context or by using different assessments and more than one context for each Outcome. Whichever approach is used, it must be clear how the evidence covers each Outcome.

Learners' readiness for assessment can be established through learning logs as described earlier. Learners can keep brief records of what they feel secure about and what they need to work on. This approach can be useful in developing autonomous learning. Informal peer assessment can also be used in this context.

There is scope within this Unit to vary learning and teaching approaches and to exercise personalisation and choice. Assessment methods may also take a variety of formats but the evidence must clearly show that the assessment standards have been met.

Possible approaches to assessment and generating evidence of progress

Evidence of progress can be gathered throughout the Unit. Co-operative learning groups could offer opportunities for shared evaluation of examples of research studies. Learners should always be clear about what they are trying to learn and what is expected of them. Regular feedback about the quality of work is an important factor in making progress towards Unit Assessment. Structured tasks could be used to enable self -assessment and peer -assessment.

Assessment could be combined in this Unit by holistically assessing all the Outcomes of the Unit in a single assessment. When assessment within the Unit is holistic, teachers and lecturers should take particular care to track the evidence for each individual Outcome.

For information on assessment and reassessment, teachers and lecturers should refer to [SQA's Guide to Assessment](#), available on the SQA website.

Administrative information

Published: July 2019 (version 2.0)

Superclass: EE

History of changes to National Unit Specification

Version	Description of change	Authorised by	Date
1.1	Unit Support Notes added. Assessment standard threshold added.	Qualifications Manager	September 2018
2.0	Unit code updated	Qualifications Manager	July 2019

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