



Course report 2019

Subject	Sociology
Level	National 5

This report provides information on candidates' performance. Teachers, lecturers and assessors may find it useful when preparing candidates for future assessment. The report is intended to be constructive and informative and to promote better understanding. It would be helpful to read this report in conjunction with the published assessment documents and marking instructions.

The statistics used in this report have been compiled before the completion of any post-results services.

Section 1: comments on the assessment

Question paper

The question paper performed as expected. Feedback from centres and markers was positive and suggested that the sampling from the course specification had been comprehensive and fair. Questions were accessible to candidates, while providing sufficient challenge.

Overall, there was a blend of questions which allowed candidates to demonstrate the extent of their knowledge and skills. The range of questions and question types within the question paper were designed to enable candidates to demonstrate their learning, while still being accessible to candidates who had a basic understanding of the course.

Assignment

The assignment performed as expected. The assessment allows candidates to choose any one of an unlimited variety of social issues as assignment topics, which means interesting research and varied assignment presentations. The use of sociological theories and concepts is expected throughout.

Section 2: comments on candidate performance

Areas that candidates performed well in

Question paper

Candidates performed particularly well in question 2(a). This was positive as it was not a question which had been asked previously. The question focused on socialisation and it is clear that this key concept in sociology is well understood.

Candidates also did well in questions 1(a) and 1(d). Similar questions have been asked previously in this section, and again candidates demonstrated learning in essential areas of sociology.

Assignment

Candidates did particularly well in section C and in section A. This shows that referencing and the ability to outline a hypothesis are well understood by candidates.

Areas that candidates found demanding

Question paper

Question 3(c)(ii) was the least well-answered by candidates, with over one third not attempting the question. There appears to be a lack of preparedness for this question relating to research evidence on the second (non-mandatory) social issue.

A number of candidates also did less well in questions 1(f), 2(c) and 3(c)(i). These are questions which are designed to allow candidates to use their higher order learning skills.

- ◆ question 1(f) asked about a more conceptual way of looking at sociological perspectives
- ◆ question 2(c) required more in-depth knowledge, which some candidates struggled with
- ◆ question 3(c)(i) needed a greater understanding of the social issue than some candidates were able to demonstrate. This is particularly true for the non-mandatory social issue

Assignment

No areas of the assignment caused particular difficulty, but many candidates scored less well in some parts.

Section E overall is still the part of the assignment that candidates find most challenging. Of the 6 marks available for explaining the topic, 2 marks are for explanations with reference to information from the sources. The other 4 available marks are for explaining the topic using sociological terminology, knowledge and understanding, including using sociological theory.

The final marks in section E are for showing how the evidence supports or challenges the common-sense view of the topic.

Section 3: preparing candidates for future assessment

Question paper

It is clear that the weakest area of the course for candidates is the second, non-mandatory, social issue. Centres must prepare candidates accordingly for this, as outlined in the course specification. This must include a thorough knowledge of research evidence related to this issue. Specific questions can be asked relating to both this social issue and to the research evidence associated with it. Centres are reminded to ensure that candidates are equipped to cope with such questions.

Assignment

Centres are reminded of the need for candidates to prepare the assignment individually. Candidates should find their own research evidence for their assignment issue.

In Section C: Using investigation skills to find appropriate sources of information, centres are reminded that candidates are not permitted to use the two sociological studies which are a mandatory part of the National 5 Sociology course:

- ◆ Rosenthal R and Jacobson L, 1968. *Pygmalion in the classroom*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.
- ◆ Kingdon G and Cassen R, 2007. *Understanding low achievement in English schools*. London School of Economics.

Grade boundary and statistical information:

Statistical information: update on courses

Number of resulted entries in 2018	206
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Number of resulted entries in 2019	259
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Statistical information: performance of candidates

Distribution of course awards including grade boundaries

Distribution of course awards	Percentage	Cumulative %	Number of candidates	Lowest mark
Maximum mark				
A	29.0%	29.0%	75	70
B	18.9%	47.9%	49	60
C	21.2%	69.1%	55	50
D	11.2%	80.3%	29	40
No award	19.7%	-	51	-

General commentary on grade boundaries

SQA's main aim is to be fair to candidates across all subjects and all levels and maintain comparable standards across the years, even as arrangements evolve and change.

SQA aims to set examinations and create marking instructions that allow:

- ◆ a competent candidate to score a minimum of 50% of the available marks (the notional C boundary)
- ◆ a well-prepared, very competent candidate to score at least 70% of the available marks (the notional A boundary)

It is very challenging to get the standard on target every year, in every subject at every level.

Therefore, SQA holds a grade boundary meeting every year for each subject at each level to bring together all the information available (statistical and judgemental). The principal assessor and SQA qualifications manager meet with the relevant SQA head of service and statistician to discuss the evidence and make decisions. Members of the SQA management team chair these meetings. SQA can adjust the grade boundaries as a result of the meetings. This allows the pass rate to be unaffected in circumstances where there is evidence that the question paper has been more, or less, challenging than usual.

- ◆ The grade boundaries can be adjusted downwards if there is evidence that the question paper is more challenging than usual.
- ◆ The grade boundaries can be adjusted upwards if there is evidence that the exam is less challenging than usual.
- ◆ Where standards are comparable to previous years, similar grade boundaries are maintained.

Grade boundaries from question papers in the same subject at the same level tend to be marginally different year to year. This is because the particular questions, and the mix of questions, are different. This is also the case for question papers set by centres. If SQA alters a boundary, this does not mean that centres should necessarily alter their boundary in the question papers that they set themselves.