



National  
Qualifications

---

# Sociology

## Assignment

### General assessment information

---

This pack contains general assessment information for centres preparing candidates for the assignment Component of Higher Sociology Course assessment.

It must be read in conjunction with the specific assessment task for this Component of Course assessment which may only be downloaded from SQA's designated secure website by authorised personnel.

---

This edition: September 2017 (version 4.0)

The information in this publication may be reproduced to support SQA qualifications. This publication must not be reproduced for commercial or trade purposes. **This material is for use by assessors.**

© Scottish Qualifications Authority 2017

# Contents

Introduction	1
What this assessment covers	2
Assessment	3
General Marking Instructions	7

# Introduction

This is the general assessment information for the Higher Sociology assignment.

This assignment is worth 30 marks out of the total of 90 marks. This is approximately 33% of the overall marks for the Course assessment. The Course will be graded A-D.

Marks for all Course Components are added up to give a total Course assessment mark which is then used as the basis for grading decisions.

This is one of two Components of Course assessment. The other Component is a question paper.

This document describes the general requirements for the assessment of the assignment Component for this Course. It gives general information and instructions for assessors.

It must be read in conjunction with the assessment task for this Component of Course assessment.

## Equality and inclusion

This Course assessment has been designed to ensure that there are no unnecessary barriers to assessment. Assessments have been designed to promote equal opportunities while maintaining the integrity of the qualification.

For guidance on assessment arrangements for disabled candidates and/or those with additional support needs, please follow the link to the Assessment Arrangements web page: [www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/14977.html](http://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/14977.html)

Guidance on inclusive approaches to delivery and assessment in this Course is provided in the *Course Support Notes*.

# What this assessment covers

This assessment component contributes approximately 33% of the total marks for the Course.

This assessment will assess the skills, knowledge and understanding specified for the Higher Sociology assignment in the *Course Assessment Specification*. These are:

- ◆ explaining differences between sociological and common-sense explanations of human social behaviour
- ◆ using research skills to investigate topics
- ◆ analysing and evaluating information, including published research
- ◆ communicating sociologically-informed views

In the Higher Sociology Course assessment, added value will focus on the following:

- ◆ breadth – drawing on knowledge and skills from across the Course
- ◆ application – requiring application of knowledge and skills

# Assessment

## Purpose

The purpose of this assessment is to generate evidence for this Component of the added value of this Course by means of an assignment.

## Assessment overview

In this assessment the candidate will choose a social topic to investigate. They will devise a suitable hypothesis and carry out secondary research on the topic to find out whether available evidence supports or fails to support this hypothesis. The candidate will need to analyse and evaluate their research findings and draw conclusions. They will need to produce a report on their research assignment. This report is the assessment evidence for the Higher Sociology assignment.

The assessor will decide when the candidate is ready to start the assessment task. The candidate will be ready when he/she knows how to carry out secondary research on a social topic. The candidate should be able to use skills to describe, explain, analyse and evaluate information and use appropriate sociological terminology. The assessor should ensure that the candidate knows how to produce a report, including references. The candidate will draw on knowledge and understanding from the Units of the Higher Sociology Course, in particular the *Human Society* Unit. They will use their knowledge of sociological theory, methods and research evidence to draw conclusions from their analysis and evaluation of their findings. They will produce a report on their research.

The assessor must give candidates guidance on:

- ◆ their choice of topic:
  - There is a free choice of topic but the topic must be one for which there are sufficient available resources to enable the candidate to complete the assignment.
- ◆ ethical considerations relating to the chosen topic:
  - The topic must be suitable for investigation by the candidate.
- ◆ ways of setting out the report:
  - Although the style and format of the report is a matter of choice, it should have a title, a contents page and clear headings.
  - The candidate must acknowledge others in their report and provide references that enable someone else to find the information.
  - All relevant information should be contained in the report and appendices should not be used.
  - Footnotes can be used where appropriate.

- ◆ the length of the report:

The report should be between 1,500 and 2,000 words long, excluding references, footnotes and appendices.

The candidate must provide the word count for the completed report, excluding appendices, footnotes and references.

If the word count exceeds the maximum by 10%, a penalty will be applied.

## **Choice of topic**

The candidate must clearly identify the topic for their research and devise a hypothesis. This is a prediction of something they expect to find from their research.

For example:

Topic: Gender and crime

Hypothesis: Women are treated unfairly by the criminal justice system

Topic: Media and socialisation

Hypothesis: Media influence has a significant impact on gender roles

Topic: Gender roles

Hypothesis: In the twenty-first century women still carry out most household tasks and childcare activities

Topic: Inequalities

Hypothesis: Social class is not a significant factor affecting life chances in the UK today

Topic: Education

Hypothesis: There are opportunities for everyone to succeed in the Scottish education system

Once the candidate has selected their topic and devised a suitable hypothesis, they should work independently throughout the assessment.

## Assessment conditions

This assessment will be carried out over a period of time. The candidate should start at an appropriate point in the Course. This would normally be when they have completed or are nearing completion of the *Sociology: Human Society* Unit.

The assessor should allocate sufficient time for candidates to carry out their research of the topic and to compile their final report.

Evidence which meets the requirements of this Component of Course assessment will be between 1,500 and 2,000 words long, excluding references, footnotes and appendices. The candidate must provide the word count for the completed report, excluding appendices, footnotes and references. If the word count exceeds the maximum by 10%, a penalty will be applied.

There are no restrictions on the resources which candidates may have access to when undertaking this assignment. For example candidates could refer to Sociology websites, journals, text books, government statistics or relevant third sector websites and publications. The candidate will describe general research findings and then choose and describe specific findings from two of the named sources. At least one of these named sources must be a relevant piece of published research.

Candidates must undertake the assessment independently. However, reasonable assistance may be provided prior to the formal assessment process taking place. The term 'reasonable assistance' is used to try to balance the need for support with the need to avoid giving too much assistance. If any candidate requires more than what is deemed to be 'reasonable assistance', they may not be ready for assessment or it may be that they have been entered for the wrong level of qualification.

Reasonable assistance may be given on a generic basis to a class or group of candidates, for example, advice on sourcing information or report style for the assignment. It may also be given to candidates on an individual basis. When reasonable assistance is given on a one-to-one basis in the context of something the candidate has already produced or demonstrated, there is a danger that it becomes support for assessment, and assessors need to be aware that this may be going beyond reasonable assistance.

Clarification may be sought by candidates regarding the wording of a task, prompt or instructions for the assessment if they find them unclear. In this case, the clarification should normally be given to the whole class.

At any stage in the assignment, reasonable assistance does not include:

- ◆ directing candidates to specific sources or resources to be used
- ◆ providing model answers
- ◆ providing any feedback on drafts, including marking

Assessors must exercise their professional responsibility in ensuring that evidence submitted by a candidate is the candidate's own work.

The assignment will be conducted under some supervision and control. This means that although candidates may complete part of the work outwith the learning and teaching setting, assessors should put in place processes for monitoring progress and ensuring that the work is the candidate's own and that plagiarism has not taken place.

Assessors should put in place mechanisms to authenticate candidate evidence. For example:

- ◆ regular checkpoint/progress meetings with candidates
- ◆ short spot-check personal interviews
- ◆ checklists which record activity/progress

## **Evidence to be gathered**

The following candidate evidence is required for this assessment:

- ◆ the research report for the Higher Sociology assignment

The report will be between 1,500 and 2,000 words. A word count, excluding references, footnotes and appendices, must be stated.

The report may be produced in written form or word-processed. Whichever is used, the report should be submitted on paper to SQA for marking.

# General Marking Instructions

In line with SQA's normal practice, the following general marking instructions are addressed to the Marker. They will also be helpful for those preparing candidates for Course assessment.

Evidence will be submitted to SQA for external marking. All marking will be quality assured by SQA.

## General marking principles the assignment

*This information is provided to help you understand the general principles you must apply when marking candidate responses to this assignment. These principles must be read in conjunction with the Detailed Marking Instructions, which identify the key features required in candidate responses.*

- (a) Marks for each candidate response must always be assigned in line with these General Marking Principles and the Detailed Marking Instructions for this assessment.
- (b) Marking should always be positive. This means that, for each candidate response, marks are accumulated for the demonstration of relevant skills, knowledge and understanding: they are not deducted from a maximum on the basis of errors or omissions.
- (c) The term 'or any other acceptable response' is used to allow for the possible variation in candidate responses. Credit should be given according to the accuracy and relevance of evidence.
- (d) Marks can be awarded for evidence wherever it appears in the candidate's report.
- (e) Marks for *describing* are based on the candidate's ability to provide a statement or structure of characteristics and/or features. This will be more than an outline or than a list and may refer to, for instance, a concept, process, experiment, situation, or facts.
- (f) Marks for *explaining* are based on the candidate's ability to relate cause and effect or make the relationship between things clear.
- (g) Marks for *analysis* are based on the candidate's ability to identify parts, the relationship between them, and their relationships with the whole; draw out and relate implications; analyse data (possibly including calculations as well as a conclusion).
- (h) Marks for *evaluation* are based on the candidate's ability to make a judgement based on criteria, or determine the value of something.
- (i) Marks for *concluding* are based on the candidate's ability to draw conclusions based on a set of information or data.
- (j) The report should be between 1,500 and 2,000 words long, excluding references, footnotes and appendices. The candidate must provide the word count for the completed report, excluding appendices, footnotes and references. If the word count exceeds the maximum by 10%, a penalty will be applied.

## Detailed Marking Instructions for the assignment

Skills, knowledge and understanding	Overview of marking	Mark scale	Marking instructions
<p>Explain differences between sociological and common-sense explanations of human social behaviour</p> <p>(6 marks)</p>	<p><i>Explains differences between sociological and common-sense explanations of human social behaviour for a chosen topic</i></p> <p>This is expected to involve:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Explaining differences between sociological explanations and common sense views relating to the topic. Sociological theory, methods or evidence should be reflected in points of explanation.</li> <li>◆ Devising and stating a suitable hypothesis for the investigation of the topic.</li> </ul>	<p>0-6</p>	<p>Up to 4 marks can be awarded for explaining differences between sociological explanations and common-sense views of the topic. Up to 2 marks can be awarded for each developed point.</p> <p>No marks will be awarded for general points on common-sense versus sociological explanations.</p> <p>Up to 2 marks can be awarded for devising and stating a suitable hypothesis for an investigation of the topic. Hypothesis must be in the form of a statement – not a question – and must be fully linked to the assignment topic.</p>

Skills, knowledge and understanding	Overview of marking	Mark scale	Marking instructions
<p>Use research skills to investigate topics (6 marks)</p>	<p><i>Describes findings from secondary research of the chosen topic</i></p> <p>The candidate is expected to describe specific findings from their own secondary research. Specific findings from two different named sources must be described.</p> <p>At least one of these named sources must be published research that is relevant to understanding this topic. This may be either a sociological study or research that has sociological significance.</p>	<p>0-6</p>	<p>Up to 6 marks can be awarded for describing the specific findings from two named sources of information.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Up to 3 marks can be awarded if only one named source is used.</li> <li>◆ A maximum of 3 marks can be awarded per source.</li> <li>◆ Up to 3 marks can be awarded if no relevant published research is used.</li> <li>◆ Candidates are not required to describe three separate findings to be awarded maximum 3 marks.</li> <li>◆ Credit developed for exemplified points of a single finding, for example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>— Finding: Average female pay is catching up with average male pay. (1 mark)</li> <li>— Female full-time hourly rate difference fell from 10.5% to 9.6% of the average male pay. (1 mark)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

Skills, knowledge and understanding	Overview of marking	Mark scale	Marking instructions
<p>Analyse and evaluate information in sociology</p> <p>(10 marks)</p>	<p><b><i>Analyses findings</i></b></p> <p>The candidate is expected to link their research findings to their topic using sociological theories.</p>	<p>0-6</p>	<p>Up to 6 marks can be awarded for analysis.</p> <p>A point of analysis could involve:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ explaining the relationship between a particular finding and sociological theory</li> <li>◆ explaining relationships between findings and the topic</li> <li>◆ any other acceptable response</li> </ul>
	<p><b><i>Evaluates sources</i></b></p> <p>The candidate is expected to evaluate the sources used, eg ‘this is reliable because’, or ‘this is a strength because’.</p>	<p>0-4</p>	<p>Up to 4 marks can be awarded for evaluation. 2 marks can be awarded for each developed point of evaluation where a supporting reason is given, eg ‘this is reliable because’, or ‘this is a strength because’.</p> <p>Up to 3 marks can be awarded for evaluation of any single source or study.</p> <p>No marks should be awarded for evaluation of a source not considered to be a valid source. No marks should be awarded if the source is a duplicate of another source for which evaluation marks have already been awarded.</p> <p>Evaluation could involve:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ making a judgement about the validity and/or reliability of information/sources</li> <li>◆ making a judgement about the strength or weakness of</li> </ul>

Skills, knowledge and understanding	Overview of marking	Mark scale	Marking instructions
			<p>evidence</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ making a judgement about research methods</li> <li>◆ suggested improvements to the methodology of a study or source</li> <li>◆ any other acceptable response</li> </ul>
<p><b>Communicate sociologically-informed views</b></p> <p><b>(8 marks)</b></p>	<p><i><b>Draws conclusions that relate to the stated hypothesis</b></i></p> <p>The candidate is expected to produce a well-structured report in which they show sociological understanding by drawing appropriate conclusions. Conclusions must relate to the hypothesis. They are expected to be based on the findings presented in the report but could also be based on wider knowledge and understanding of sociological theory and methods. The candidate is expected to draw a conclusion wherever it is appropriate.</p>	<p><b>0-8</b></p>	<p>Marks should be awarded for drawing conclusions at any point in the report.</p> <p><b>1 mark</b> can be awarded for drawing a conclusion about whether the candidate’s own research findings appear to support or fail to support their hypothesis.</p> <p><b>Up to 5 marks</b> can be awarded for each other conclusion made. Conclusions could be drawn from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ the candidate’s research findings</li> <li>◆ theoretical explanations of social behaviour for the topic</li> <li>◆ research methods used to investigate the topic</li> <li>◆ wider research, eg further research recommended for the topic</li> <li>◆ existing or possible future Government policies on the relevant topic</li> <li>◆ any other relevant information</li> </ul> <p><b>Up to 4 marks</b> can be awarded if no hypothesis is given.</p>

Skills, knowledge and understanding	Overview of marking	Mark scale	Marking instructions
			<p><b>Up to 2 marks</b> can be awarded for acknowledging the work of others throughout the report <b>or</b> in a separate reference section. <b>2 marks</b> should only be awarded if a list of references is given which is organised in such a way as to enable someone else to find the <b>exact</b> source of information used again.</p> <p>Basic attempted acknowledgement of the work of others, or inaccurate or incomplete references which do not enable someone else to find the <b>exact</b> source of information again should be awarded <b>1 mark</b>.</p>
	<i>Total marks</i>	<b>30</b>	

[END OF MARKING INSTRUCTIONS]

## Administrative information

---

Published: September 2017 (version 4.0)

---

### History of changes

Version	Description of change	Authorised by	Date
2.0	Word 'suitable' added to hypothesis.  Media and Socialisation example changed to reduce scope.  Marking Instructions updated – allocation of some marks has changed, overall mark allocation remains unchanged.  Clarification that 'published research' may be either a sociological study or research that has sociological significance. Section on word count penalty amended.	Qualifications Manager	September 2015
3.0	Detailed Marking Instructions – minor changes made to mark allocations: number of marks for conclusions made reduced from 6 marks to 5 marks; number of marks available for referencing increased from 1 mark to 2 marks.	Qualifications Manager	September 2016
4.0	Detailed Marking Instructions – information added to several sections for clarification purposes only regarding how marks are assigned.	Qualifications Manager	September 2017

## Security and confidentiality

This document can be used by practitioners in SQA approved centres for the assessment of National Courses and not for any other purpose.

## Copyright

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for assessment purposes provided that no profit is derived from reproduction and that, if reproduced in part, the source is acknowledged. If it needs to be reproduced for any purpose other than assessment, it is the centre's responsibility to obtain copyright clearance.

Re-use for alternative purposes without the necessary copyright clearance may constitute copyright infringement.

© Scottish Qualifications Authority 2017