



Higher
Coursework
Assessment Task



Higher Sociology

Assignment

Assessment task

This document provides information for teachers and lecturers about the coursework component of this course in terms of the skills, knowledge and understanding that are assessed. It must be read in conjunction with the course specification.

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Contents

Introduction	1
Marking instructions	2
Instructions for candidates	7

Introduction

This document contains marking instructions and instructions for candidates for the Higher Sociology assignment. You must read it in conjunction with the course specification.

This assignment is worth 30 marks. This is 27% of the overall marks for the course assessment.

This is one of two course assessment components. The other component is a question paper.

Marking instructions

In line with SQA's normal practice, the following marking instructions for the Higher Sociology assignment are addressed to the marker. They are also helpful for those preparing candidates for course assessment.

Candidates' evidence is submitted to SQA for external marking.

General marking principles

Always apply these general principles. Use them in conjunction with the detailed marking instructions, which identify the key features required in candidates' responses.

- a Always use positive marking. This means candidates accumulate marks for the demonstration of relevant skills, knowledge and understanding; marks are not deducted for errors or omissions.
- b If a candidate response does not seem to be covered by either the principles or detailed marking instructions, and you are uncertain how to assess it, you must seek guidance from your team leader.
- c The term 'or any other relevant response' allows for possible variation in candidates' responses. Always award marks according to the accuracy and relevance of an answer.
- d Marks are awarded for evidence wherever this appears in candidates' reports.
- e 'Describe' requires candidates to make factual points or state characteristics and/or features. This will be more than an outline or a list and may refer to, for example, a concept, process, experiment, situation or facts.
- f 'Explain' requires candidates to relate cause and effect and/or make relationships between things clear.
- g 'Analyse' requires candidates to identify parts, the relationship between them, and their relationships with the whole; draw out and relate implications; and analyse data (possibly including calculations as well as a conclusion).
- h 'Evaluate' requires candidates to make a judgement based on criteria to determine the value of something.
- i 'Concluding' requires candidates to draw conclusions based on a set of information or data.
- j The assignment report should be between 1,500 and 2,000 words, excluding references, footnotes and appendices. Candidates must provide the word count for the completed report, excluding references, footnotes and appendices. If the word count exceeds the maximum by more than 10%, a penalty will be applied.

Detailed marking instructions

Skills, knowledge and understanding	Marking instructions	Max mark	Additional guidance
<p>Explain the sociological significance of a topic (6 marks)</p>	<p>Explains the sociological significance of human social behaviour for a chosen topic.</p> <p>Candidates are expected to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ introduce the topic and explain why it is of sociological significance ◆ devise and state a suitable hypothesis for an investigation of the topic 	<p>6</p>	<p>Award a maximum of 4 marks where candidates introduce the topic by explaining its sociological significance.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Candidates should introduce their topic, including why they are researching it and explain its wider sociological significance. This may include reference to contemporary accounts or debates, such as media articles or reports. ◆ Candidates should explain why it is a relevant topic for sociologists to investigate. <p>Award a maximum of 2 marks where candidates devise and state a suitable hypothesis for an investigation of the topic.</p> <p>Hypothesis must be in the form of a statement – not a question – and must be fully linked to the assignment topic.</p>
<p>Use research skills to investigate topics (6 marks)</p>	<p>Describes findings from secondary research of the chosen topic.</p> <p>Candidates are expected to describe specific findings from their own secondary research:</p>	<p>6</p>	<p>Award a maximum of 6 marks where candidates describe specific findings from two named sources of information.</p> <p>Award a maximum of 3 marks per source.</p> <p>Award a maximum of 3 marks if only one named source is used.</p> <p>Award a maximum of 3 marks if candidates use no relevant published research.</p>

Skills, knowledge and understanding	Marking instructions	Max mark	Additional guidance
<p>Use research skills to investigate topics (continued)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ specific findings from two different named sources must be described ◆ 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 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ The mandatory studies from the course must not be used: Cohen, S. (1972) <i>Folk Devils and Moral Panics</i>; Goldthorpe, J. H. (1972) <i>Oxford Mobility Studies</i>; and Blanden, J. and Machin, S. (2008) <i>Up and Down the Generational Income Ladder in Britain: Past Changes and Future Prospects</i>. ◆ Candidates are not required to describe three separate findings to be awarded the full 3 marks. <p>Award marks for developed points of a single finding, for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Finding: Average female pay is catching up with average male pay (1 mark). Female full-time hourly rate difference fell from 10.5% to 9.6% of the average male pay (1 mark).
<p>Analyse and evaluate information in sociology (10 marks)</p>	<p>Analyses findings.</p> <p>Candidates are expected to link their research findings to their topic using sociological theories.</p>	<p>6</p>	<p>Award a maximum of 6 marks for candidates' analysis of their findings.</p> <p>A point of analysis could involve:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ explaining the relationship between a particular finding and sociological theory ◆ explaining relationships between findings and the topic ◆ any other relevant response

Skills, knowledge and understanding	Marking instructions	Max mark	Additional guidance
<p>Analyse and evaluate information in sociology (continued)</p>	<p>Evaluates sources.</p> <p>Candidates are expected to evaluate the sources used, for example, ‘this is reliable because’, or ‘this is a strength because’.</p>	<p>4</p>	<p>Award a maximum of 4 marks for candidates’ evaluation of sources used.</p> <p>Award 2 marks for each developed point of evaluation where candidates give a supporting reason, for example, ‘this is reliable because’, or ‘this is a strength because’.</p> <p>Award a maximum of 3 marks where candidates provide an evaluation of any single source or study.</p> <p>Award 0 marks where candidates provide an evaluation of a source which is not considered to be a valid source.</p> <p>Award 0 marks if candidates provide a source that 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"> ◆ making a judgement about the validity and/or reliability of information/sources ◆ making a judgement about the strength or weakness of evidence ◆ making a judgement about research methods ◆ suggesting improvements to the methodology of a study or source ◆ any other relevant response

Skills, knowledge and understanding	Marking instructions	Max mark	Additional guidance
<p>Communicate sociologically-informed views (8 marks)</p>	<p>Draws conclusions that relate to the stated hypothesis.</p> <p>Candidates are expected to produce a well-structured report in which they show sociological understanding by drawing appropriate conclusions.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>Candidates are expected to draw a conclusion wherever it is appropriate.</p>	<p>8</p>	<p>Award marks where candidates draw conclusions at any point in their report.</p> <p>Award 1 mark where candidates have drawn a conclusion about whether their own research findings appear to support or fail to support their hypothesis.</p> <p>Award a maximum of 5 marks for each conclusion made. Conclusions could be drawn from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ the candidate’s research findings ◆ theoretical explanations of social behaviour for the topic ◆ research methods used to investigate the topic ◆ wider research, for example, further research recommended for the topic ◆ existing or possible future government policies on the relevant topic ◆ any other relevant information <p>Award a maximum of 4 marks if candidates have given no hypothesis.</p> <p>Award a maximum of 2 marks where candidates acknowledge the work of others throughout the report or in a separate reference section. These 2 marks should only be awarded if candidates have given a list of references organised in such a way as to enable someone else to find the exact source of information used.</p> <p>Award 1 mark where candidates have attempted a basic acknowledgement of the work of others, or for inaccurate or incomplete references which do not enable someone else to find the exact source of information.</p>
	<p>Total marks</p>	<p>30</p>	

Instructions for candidates

This assessment applies to the assignment for Higher Sociology.

This assignment is worth 30 marks. This is 27% of the overall marks for the course assessment.

It assesses the following skills, knowledge and understanding:

- ◆ explaining the sociological significance of a topic
- ◆ using research skills to investigate topics
- ◆ analysing and evaluating information, including published research
- ◆ communicating sociologically-informed views

Your teacher or lecturer will let you know if there are any specific conditions for doing this assessment.

In this assessment, you have to:

- ◆ choose a relevant social topic to investigate
- ◆ devise a hypothesis and carry out secondary research on the topic to find out whether available evidence supports or fails to support your hypothesis
- ◆ analyse and evaluate your research findings, use sociological theory and draw conclusions
- ◆ produce a report on your research investigation – your report is the assessment evidence for the assignment

Before you start this assignment you need to understand the research process in sociology and be able to carry out secondary research on a topic that is ethically suitable.

You need skills in describing, explaining, analysing and evaluating research findings. You need to be able to produce a report, which includes references. You need to draw on knowledge and understanding from the three areas of the course, in particular the human society area of study. You need to use sociological terminology and be able to draw conclusions from your analysis and evaluation of your research findings.

Your teacher or lecturer may give you guidance and support when you are choosing a topic. You may choose any topic but it must be a suitable topic for which there are sufficient available resources to enable you to complete the assignment.

You must clearly identify the topic for your research and devise a suitable hypothesis.

Once you have chosen the topic and devised a hypothesis you must work independently to carry out the research task.

There are no restrictions on the resources to which you may have access when undertaking this assignment; however, you must not use the mandatory studies from the course: Cohen, S. (1972) *Folk Devils and Moral Panics*; Goldthorpe, J. H. (1972) *Oxford Mobility*

Studies; and Blanden, J. and Machin, S. (2008) *Up and Down the Generational Income Ladder in Britain: Past Changes and Future Prospects*.

You could refer to sociology websites, journals, textbooks, government statistics or relevant third sector websites and publications. You need to investigate your chosen topic and describe your research findings in your report. You need to choose and describe specific findings from two named sources of information in your report. At least one of these named sources must be published research that is relevant to understanding your topic. This may be either a sociological study or research that has sociological significance.

Your teacher or lecturer may give you reasonable assistance. For example, they can provide guidance on:

- ◆ your choice of topic – your teacher or lecturer will let you know if the topic is one for which there are sufficient available resources to enable you to complete the assignment
- ◆ ethical considerations such as plagiarism or inadvertent internet access to illegal or inappropriate material relating to your topic
- ◆ ways of setting out a report

You may ask your teacher or lecturer for clarification about this assignment task if you find the instructions unclear. In this case, the clarification is normally given to the whole class.

At any stage in the assignment, reasonable assistance does not include your teacher or lecturer:

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

The assignment is conducted under some supervision and control. This means that although you may complete part of the work outwith the learning and teaching setting, your teacher or lecturer monitors your progress to ensure that the work is your own and that plagiarism has not taken place.

The assignment may be produced in written form or be word-processed.

The style and format of your report is your choice. The report should have a title, a contents page and clear headings. You must acknowledge others when you use their work in your report and provide references to enable another person to find the work you are referring to. All relevant information should be in your report. Footnotes can be used where appropriate.

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

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

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

Skills, knowledge and understanding	Overview of marking	Available marks
Analyse and evaluate information in sociology	<p>A maximum of 6 marks are available for your analysis of the findings.</p> <p>You are expected to link your research findings to your topic using sociological theories.</p> <p>For example, analysis could involve:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ explaining the relationship between a particular finding and sociological theory ◆ explaining relationships between findings and the topic <p>A maximum of 4 marks are available for evaluation.</p> <p>2 marks are available for each developed point of evaluation where a supporting reason is given, for example, 'this is reliable because', or 'this is a strength because'. Evaluation could involve:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ making a judgement about the validity and/or reliability of information/sources ◆ making a judgement about the strength or weakness of evidence ◆ making a judgement about research methods 	<p>6</p> <p>4</p>
Communicate sociologically-informed views	<p>1 mark is available for drawing a conclusion about whether your research findings appear to support or fail to support your hypothesis.</p> <p>A maximum of 5 marks are available for conclusions made. Conclusions could be drawn from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ your research findings ◆ theoretical explanations of social behaviour for your topic ◆ research methods used to investigate your topic <p>A maximum of 2 marks are available for referencing. You must acknowledge other people's work when you use it in your report and you must provide a list of references for sources used. The information you give in the reference should be sufficient to enable someone else to find the source of information.</p>	<p>6</p> <p>2</p>
Total available marks		30

Administrative information

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History of changes

Version	Description of change	Date

Note: you are advised to check SQA's website to ensure you are using the most up-to-date version of this document.

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