

National 5 Sociology

Course code:	C868 75
Course assessment code:	X868 75
SCQF:	level 5 (24 SCQF credit points)
Valid from:	session 2017–18

The course specification provides detailed information about the course and course assessment to ensure consistent and transparent assessment year on year. It describes the structure of the course and the course assessment in terms of the skills, knowledge and understanding that are assessed.

This document is for teachers and lecturers and contains all the mandatory information you need to deliver the course.

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Course overview

The course consists of 24 SCQF credit points which includes time for preparation for course assessment. The notional length of time for a candidate to complete the course is 160 hours.

The course assessment has two components.

Component	Marks	Duration
Component 1: question paper	70	2 hours
Component 2: assignment	30	See course assessment section

Recommended entry	Progression
<p>Entry to this course is at the discretion of the centre.</p> <p>Candidates should have achieved the fourth curriculum level or the National 4 People and Society course or the National 4 Modern Studies course or equivalent qualifications and/or experience prior to starting this course.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ Higher Sociology course◆ other qualifications in related areas◆ further study, employment or training

Conditions of award

The grade awarded is based on the total marks achieved across all course assessment components.

Course rationale

National Courses reflect Curriculum for Excellence values, purposes and principles. They offer flexibility, provide more time for learning, more focus on skills and applying learning, and scope for personalisation and choice. Every course provides opportunities for candidates to develop breadth, challenge and application. The focus and balance of assessment is tailored to each subject area.

The National 5 Sociology course helps candidates to develop an understanding of society that goes beyond personal experience and common-sense explanations. They learn to think about human society, social issues, culture and identity from different points of view. They also learn about the key role of evidence in supporting explanations for human social behaviour and become familiar with research methods in sociology.

Purpose and aims

The course develops candidates' sense of themselves as part of society. The sociological approach encourages candidates to ask questions about the social world in which we live, and to use evidence to support explanations for human social behaviour.

Candidates develop knowledge and understanding of the sociological perspectives, theories and concepts used to investigate and explain aspects of the social world. This sociological understanding encourages imaginative thought and prompts questions about our world.

Candidates develop:

- ◆ an understanding of society through a study of basic sociological perspectives, theories and concepts
- ◆ an understanding that sociology challenges 'common-sense' explanations about human social behaviour
- ◆ an awareness of cultural and social diversity and the significance of relationships among individuals, groups and institutions
- ◆ an awareness of the role of sources of information, research evidence and research methods in sociology
- ◆ basic investigation skills to select, organise and interpret information
- ◆ thinking and communication skills
- ◆ confidence in investigating and using evidence to explain social experiences and social issues
- ◆ the ability to communicate their own and others' experiences of social life and views of the world

Who is this course for?

The course is suitable for learners wishing to develop a deeper understanding of the social world in which we live, as well as those who wish to progress to more specialised training, further education or employment. Learners may have little or no prior experience of studying sociology, but their general education and life experience will provide a good foundation for beginning this qualification.

Course content

The National 5 Sociology course comprises three areas of study. Each area offers options in order to allow personalisation and choice.

Human society

Candidates develop an understanding of the sociological approach to studying human societies. They investigate the research methods used in sociology and describe relationships that exist among individuals, groups and institutions from different sociological perspectives.

Culture and identity

Candidates develop a basic knowledge and understanding of how to use sociological concepts to explain culture and identity. They investigate and explain the relationship between culture and identity and develop skills in collecting, using and communicating information from a range of sources. They also develop an awareness of diversity.

Social issues

Candidates develop a sociological understanding of contemporary social issues. They develop knowledge of sociological theories and the terminology used to explain social issues. They also develop skills in using a range of sources, including research evidence, to justify points of view.

Skills, knowledge and understanding

Skills, knowledge and understanding for the course

The following provides a broad overview of the subject skills, knowledge and understanding developed in the course:

- ◆ identifying and describing basic differences between sociological and common-sense explanations of human social behaviour
- ◆ understanding society by describing sociological perspectives, theories and concepts
- ◆ describing the sociological significance of relationships among individuals, groups and institutions
- ◆ using investigation skills to find appropriate sources of information
- ◆ organising and interpreting information in sociology
- ◆ describing the main research methods used in sociology
- ◆ using sociological explanations for human social behaviour
- ◆ using knowledge and understanding of research and evidence to support explanations

Skills, knowledge and understanding for the course assessment

The following provides details of skills, knowledge and understanding sampled in the course assessment.

Skills, knowledge and understanding for the question paper

Candidates are required to:

- ◆ understand society by describing sociological perspectives, theories and concepts
- ◆ describe the sociological significance of relationships among individuals, groups and institutions
- ◆ describe the main research methods used in sociology
- ◆ use sociological explanations for human social behaviour
- ◆ use knowledge and understanding of research and evidence to support explanations

Human society

Candidates are required to explain and use the following terms correctly: common-sense and sociological approaches, research methods, qualitative and quantitative data, structural and action perspectives.

They are also required to describe and explain:

- ◆ the main features of the common-sense approach to understanding human society, the main features of the sociological approach to understanding human society, and the differences between the two
- ◆ the main features, advantages and disadvantages of three quantitative methods: questionnaires, official statistics, structured interviews
- ◆ the main features, advantages and disadvantages of three qualitative methods: participant observation, non-participant observation, unstructured interviews
- ◆ basic features of the structural and action perspectives, including describing two differences between the structural and action perspectives
- ◆ the different way in which these perspectives explain relationships among individuals, groups and institutions in society

Culture and identity

Candidates are required to explain and use sociological concepts of culture, subculture, identity and diversity.

They are also required to describe and explain:

- ◆ the basic process of socialisation
- ◆ primary socialisation; secondary socialisation; agents of socialisation; rules, norms and values
- ◆ the relationship between the socialisation process and the formation of identity
- ◆ examples of socialisation, culture and identity using appropriate concepts
- ◆ features of cultures and subcultures
- ◆ features and examples of diversity within cultures and subcultures

Candidates must use information from sources or research evidence to support explanations.

Social issues

Candidates are required to:

- ◆ use sociological theories and research evidence to explain social issues
- ◆ explain the role of research evidence in sociology
- ◆ describe and explain two social issues: one social issue must be differential achievement in education relating to class, gender and ethnicity
- ◆ use two sociological theories, one of which must be a structural theory, when explaining social issues
- ◆ refer to research evidence when explaining social issues. For the social issue of differential achievement in education this must include:
 - 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
- ◆ describe and explain a second social issue of choice
- ◆ describe and explain issues of inequality in terms of class, gender and ethnicity in relation to this social issue
- ◆ use two sociological theories to explain the social issue
- ◆ apply two pieces of research evidence to support explanations for this social issue

Skills, knowledge and understanding for the assignment

The following skills, knowledge and understanding are assessed in the assignment:

- ◆ identifying and describing basic differences between sociological and common-sense explanations of human social behaviour related to a topic of interest to sociologists
- ◆ using investigation skills to find appropriate sources of information
- ◆ organising and interpreting information in sociology
- ◆ communicating sociologically informed views

Candidates must:

- ◆ choose and describe a topic that is of interest to sociologists
- ◆ identify and describe basic differences between sociological and common-sense explanations of human social behaviour related to the topic
- ◆ use investigation skills to find appropriate sources of information for the topic — these must not include the two pieces of research evidence that are used for the question paper: Rosenthal R, and Jacobson L, 1968. *Pygmalion in the classroom*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston; and Kingdon G and Cassen R, 2007. *Understanding low achievement in English schools*. London School of Economics
- ◆ organise and interpret information in sociology
- ◆ communicate sociologically informed views

Skills, knowledge and understanding included in the course are appropriate to the SCQF level of the course. The SCQF level descriptors give further information on characteristics and expected performance at each SCQF level (www.scqf.org.uk).

Skills for learning, skills for life and skills for work

This course helps candidates to develop broad, generic skills. These skills are based on [SQA's Skills Framework: Skills for Learning, Skills for Life and Skills for Work](#) and draw from the following main skills areas:

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

These skills must be built into the course where there are appropriate opportunities and the level should be appropriate to the level of the course.

Further information on building in skills for learning, skills for life and skills for work is given in the course support notes.

Course assessment

Course assessment is based on the information provided in this document.

The course assessment meets the key purposes and aims of the course by addressing:

- ◆ breadth — drawing on knowledge and skills from across the course
- ◆ application — requiring application of knowledge and/or skills in practical or theoretical contexts as appropriate

This enables candidates to extend and apply the skills, knowledge and understanding acquired during the course, assessed by a question paper and an assignment.

Course assessment structure: question paper

Question paper

70 marks

The question paper assesses candidates' use of skills, and their knowledge and understanding of sociological perspectives, theories, concepts and issues. Candidates must use sociological explanations and research evidence to respond to questions.

The question paper allows candidates to demonstrate the following skills, knowledge and understanding:

- ◆ identifying and describing basic differences between sociological and common-sense explanations of human society
- ◆ understanding society by describing sociological perspectives, theories and concepts
- ◆ describing the sociological significance of relationships among individuals, groups and institutions
- ◆ describing the main research methods used in sociology
- ◆ using sociological explanations for human social behaviour
- ◆ using knowledge and understanding of research and evidence to support explanations

The question paper has three sections. The first section is worth 30 marks, the other two sections are worth 20 marks each. The question paper therefore has 70 marks out of a total of 100 marks for the course assessment and constitutes 70% of the course assessment.

Setting, conducting and marking the question paper

The question paper is set and marked by SQA, and conducted in centres under conditions specified for external examinations by SQA. Candidates complete the question paper in 2 hours.

Specimen question papers for National 5 courses are published on SQA's website. These illustrate the standard, structure and requirements of the question papers candidates sit. The specimen papers also include marking instructions.

Course assessment structure: assignment

Assignment

30 marks

The assignment requires candidates to use sociological skills, knowledge and understanding to investigate a topic in sociology. The assignment comprises several stages, culminating in a report which gives a sociologically informed view of the topic studied.

The assignment allows candidates to demonstrate the following skills, knowledge and understanding:

- ◆ identifying and describing basic differences between sociological and common-sense explanations of a topic of interest to sociologists
- ◆ using investigation skills to find appropriate sources of information
- ◆ organising and interpreting information in sociology
- ◆ communicating sociologically informed views

The assignment has 30 marks out of a total of 100 marks for the course assessment and constitutes 30% of the course assessment.

Setting, conducting and marking the assignment

The assignment gives candidates an open choice of topics within guidelines set by SQA. Evidence is submitted to SQA for external marking. All marking is quality assured by SQA.

Assessment conditions

The assignment has two stages:

- ◆ research
- ◆ production of evidence (report)

In the initial stages of the assignment, candidates choose a topic for investigation and undertake the investigation, keeping a record of findings and sources. It is important that candidates understand the requirements of the written report clearly at the outset of the assignment so that they can carry out appropriate investigation. Candidates should use sociological terminology as appropriate in their assignment.

Candidates will:

- ◆ choose and describe a topic of interest to sociologists
- ◆ identify and describe basic differences between sociological and common-sense explanations related to the topic
- ◆ use investigation skills to find appropriate sources of information for the topic
- ◆ organise and interpret information in sociology
- ◆ communicate sociologically informed views

Assessors should support candidates to choose a topic to investigate. The choice should be based on the candidate's interest and available resources. There is a free choice of topic to investigate. Assessors must ensure that whichever topic candidates choose, they are able to meet the requirements for successful completion of the assignment. They must also ensure that the topic chosen conforms to the British Sociological Association's Statement of Ethical Practice.

Examples of suitable topics are:

- ◆ media influence on identity — are we shaped by what we see?
- ◆ family patterns have undergone tremendous change in the past 60 years — investigate how this has changed gender roles in the family
- ◆ do we create society or does society create us? — investigate the role of the individual in society

Time

The assessment is carried out over a period of time. Candidates should start at an appropriate point in the course, normally when they have completed most of the work in the course. The evidence should be completed in time to meet submission dates set by SQA.

Supervision, control and authentication

The assignment is 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 plagiarism has not taken place. For example:

- ◆ regular checkpoint/progress meetings with candidates
- ◆ short spot-check personal interviews
- ◆ checklists which record activity/progress
- ◆ photographs, film or audio evidence

Group work approaches as part of the preparation for assessment can be helpful to simulate real-life situations, share tasks and promote team-working skills. However, there must be clear evidence for each candidate to show that they have met the evidence requirements. Group work is not appropriate once formal work on assessment has started.

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

Resources

There are no restrictions on the resources to which candidates may have access.

Reasonable assistance

Candidates must undertake the assessment, whatever the nature, 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 a candidate requires more than what is deemed to be 'reasonable assistance', they may not be ready for assessment.

Reasonable assistance may be given on a generic basis to a class or group of candidates, eg advice on how to develop a project plan. It may also be given to candidates on an individual basis. Candidates may seek clarification regarding the choice of topic. 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 or it may be that they have been entered for the wrong level of qualification.

Reasonable assistance may include:

- ◆ directing candidates to the instructions for candidates
- ◆ clarifying instructions/requirements of the task
- ◆ advising candidates on the choice of topic
- ◆ advising candidates on possible sources of information
- ◆ arranging visits to enable gathering of evidence
- ◆ interim progress checks

Reasonable assistance does not include:

- ◆ providing the topic
- ◆ directing candidates to specific resources to be used
- ◆ providing model answers
- ◆ providing detailed feedback on drafts, including marking

Evidence to be gathered

The candidate evidence required for this assessment is the report of the candidate's sociological investigation.

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

Volume

Evidence should be between 800 and 1,200 words long, excluding references, footnotes and appendices. Candidates 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 is applied.

Grading

A candidate's overall grade is determined by their performance across the course assessment. The course assessment is graded A–D on the basis of the total mark for all course assessment components.

Grade description for C

For the award of grade C, candidates will typically have demonstrated successful performance in relation to the skills, knowledge and understanding for the course.

Grade description for A

For the award of grade A, candidates will typically have demonstrated a consistently high level of performance in relation to the skills, knowledge and understanding for the course.

Equality and inclusion

This course is designed to be as fair and as accessible as possible with no unnecessary barriers to learning or assessment.

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/assessmentarrangements.

Further information

The following reference documents provide useful information and background.

- ◆ [National 5 Sociology subject page](#)
- ◆ [Assessment arrangements web page](#)
- ◆ [Building the Curriculum 3–5](#)
- ◆ [Design Principles for National Courses](#)
- ◆ [Guide to Assessment](#)
- ◆ [SCQF Framework and SCQF level descriptors](#)
- ◆ [SCQF Handbook](#)
- ◆ [SQA Skills Framework: Skills for Learning, Skills for Life and Skills for Work](#)
- ◆ [Coursework Authenticity: A Guide for Teachers and Lecturers](#)
- ◆ [Educational Research Reports](#)
- ◆ [SQA Guidelines on e-assessment for Schools](#)
- ◆ [SQA e-assessment web page](#)

Administrative information

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History of changes to course specification

Version	Description of change	Authorised by	Date

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