



National 5 Sociology: guidance on creating assessments

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Introduction and purpose

This document provides guidance for teachers and lecturers delivering National 5 Sociology to prepare assessments for their learners. You should read this guidance alongside SQA's [guidance on evidence for estimates](#). You should also refer to the course specification and course support effective for the current year, which you can find on the [National 5 Sociology subject page](#) on SQA's website.

Assessments may have several purposes, but they will likely be used for:

- ◆ diagnostic information, which helps to inform teaching and learning
- ◆ predictive information, which helps in decisions on course estimates
- ◆ practice for candidates in an external assessment context
- ◆ evidence for exceptional circumstances, should it be needed

Where evidence is used for predictive purposes or as evidence for exceptional circumstances, it is important that the assessments used are as close to the structure and format of the final exam as possible. This document provides guidance on how to meet these criteria; however, different forms of assessment may be appropriate for other purposes.

You can use this guidance to produce prelims and other assessments that are designed to be formative and help prepare learners to sit SQA assessments in future. The guidance illustrates best practice in assessment design and marking to SQA standards. This does not mean that other forms of assessment are not valid, as assessments are carried out for a variety of purposes.

What are prelims?

A prelim or mock exam is carried out under the same conditions as the final exam. It should be clearly aligned to the course specification, content, and level of demand as exemplified in the [specimen question paper and past papers](#). Because specimen question papers and past papers are in the public domain, and candidates can readily access them, they should not be used in their entirety. However, you can incorporate individual questions from past papers into prelims or mock question papers. Alternatively, you can create your own questions.

Understanding course assessment requirements and standards

To create valid, reliable, practicable and fair assessments, it is important to have a clear understanding of:

- ◆ the range of skills, knowledge and understanding the question papers cover
- ◆ the assessment requirements and the structure of the question papers
- ◆ the grade descriptions for the course

Information on these aspects is available from the course specification, specimen question papers, past papers, and [Understanding Standards](#) materials for each course.

Conditions of assessment

Ideally, centre-created assessments should replicate SQA exams as closely as possible, although they may not always cover all of the course. This means that assessments should be closed book (without notes), supervised, and timed whenever possible. The length of time given to answer should correspond to the time allowed for the SQA National 5 Sociology question paper. An assessment covering all three sections and worth 70 marks should therefore be completed in 2 hours. If an assessment is covering one section of the question paper only, the same minutes to marks ratio should be maintained as far as possible. An assessment on the 'Human society' section of the course should be worth 30 marks and therefore last for 50 minutes. An assessment on the 'Culture and identity' section or 'Social issues' section should be for 20 marks and therefore last for 35 minutes.

Timing (when assessment is carried out)

Assessments that you carry out early in the course of study are likely to be of less use in terms of exam preparation or generating evidence of likely success than evidence you gather later. There are other reasons for carrying out assessments early in the course, such as to ensure fundamental concepts such as sociological perspectives and theories are understood. If you use early assessments, further evidence from assessments later in the academic year may demonstrate a candidate's progression and be useful in building a profile and preparing for the final exam. Assessments taken straight after learning a section of the course and only covering that section are also less likely to be a good indicator of future success, as this does not test recall in a similar way to the final exam.

Creating an assessment

Centre-created assessments that closely replicate those used by SQA are most likely to prepare candidates well for the final exam.

To produce an assessment, you should consider a number of elements:

Course coverage

You can ask about any part of the course content in the exam, but only a sample of the course is assessed in any question paper. Centre-created assessments should aim to replicate this by sampling from across the course and should do so in a manner that mirrors the approach taken in SQA assessments.

There are three sections of the course that are assessed in the question paper: human society; culture and identity; and social issues. You should cover all of these sections in an assessment to give candidates a similar experience to sitting an SQA question paper. Within each of the sections, you can assess a number of elements, and you should select from these to provide coverage that is broad without duplication.

You should take care to avoid questions that invite candidates to use the same material when answering different questions. For example, in the 'Human society' section, the following questions would both be suitable individually; however, they should not appear in the same assessment, as there would be over-sampling of one part of the course and there could be overlap in the answers:

- 1 Describe two features of participant observation.
- 2 Explain one advantage and one disadvantage of participant observation.

Avoid over-sampling from one particular aspect of the course and do not include combinations of questions that would allow candidates to gain marks in different questions using similar answers. Please note that, although these examples are from the 'Human society' section, this advice equally applies in the other two areas of study.

You can only assess the topics that are covered in the course specification. For each of the three sections, this means:

Human society

Candidates are required to describe, 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, and structured interviews
- ◆ the main features, advantages and disadvantages of three qualitative methods: participant observation, non-participant observation, and 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 describe, 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

Question paper structure

Assessments that you create for a single section should include a blend of question types within that section. When you create an assessment with full course coverage, including all three sections, then you should include a blend of questions across the whole question paper. You should consider this if the assessments are three separate sections, taken at different times but combined for an overall estimate of candidate performance.

The 'Human society' section should typically include five or six shorter-response questions, although this is not rigid. Each question, or part of a question, is usually worth between 2 and 6 marks, remembering that questions may be subdivided.

Level of demand

A centre-created assessment's level of demand should match the level of demand in SQA question papers for National 5 Sociology. There should be questions that are easily accessible for C-grade candidates and questions that allow A-grade candidates to display their abilities. You can achieve this with balance across the assessment, and the best way to do this is by following the pattern of questions from previous exam diets. However, please remember that many questions in National 5 Sociology have differentiation by outcome — it is in part the candidate's responses that determine their ultimate grade, rather than the 'difficulty' of the questions that they can answer correctly.

Constructing a question

Question stems and the command words used are important in National 5 Sociology and due regard should be paid to their use. The question stem is not necessarily an indicator of how difficult the question is, however there is a hierarchy of process involved:

- ◆ 'Describe' questions require candidates to make factual points or state characteristics and/or features.
- ◆ 'Explain' questions require candidates to relate cause and effect and/or make relationships between things clear.

Where questions ask candidates for a number of responses, such as 'Describe **two** features of the structural perspective', they will usually have 2 marks per description requested. If they ask for a specified number of explanations, such as 'Explain **two** differences between the structural and action perspectives', they will usually have 3 marks for each explanation required.

Writing inclusive questions

The best way to make sure that you write inclusive questions is to use the wording of the 'Course content' section of the course specification, along with the command word. The wording of the course specification should be familiar to candidates and using it will help them to decode the question more quickly and focus on their response.

Furthermore, you should follow the guidelines below:

- ◆ Write questions that are clear, precise, and easy to understand. Apart from appropriate sociological terminology, avoid using jargon or difficult language.
- ◆ Use terminology that is familiar to all candidates.
- ◆ Consider the impact of cultural and linguistic issues when writing questions.
- ◆ When constructing scenarios or arguments, avoid stereotyping. For example, think about using a female name when creating a scenario that includes a stereotypical male role or occupation, and vice versa. Or use gender-neutral names.
- ◆ Use names that reflect the cultural diversity of the community of your centre, and of Scotland.
- ◆ As much as possible, try to make questions concise and easy to read.

Marking reliability

Published marking instructions are available for SQA past papers and the specimen question paper. These demonstrate the required marking standard.

It is good practice to prepare the marking instructions at the same time as you construct the assessment. You can then refine marking instructions considering candidate responses. They should be agreed between all markers and applied consistently. Cross-marking of a sample of each marker's work should occur to ensure the marking instructions have been applied accurately and consistently.

Some common marking issues include:

- ◆ inconsistent application of the marking instructions
- ◆ markers being over-lenient or too harsh
- ◆ candidates being awarded marks despite the fact they have not given sufficient detail to answer the question

In addition, you should only allocate marks based on the written response and not on what the response infers.

Checklist for prelim writing

Yes or No	Checklist
	Contains questions drawn from at least three past papers or specimen question papers (if using).
	Approximately 30% of marks are A-type, 20% are B-type, 50% are C-type.
	Each question assesses only what is listed in the course specification.
	Paper structure, format, and language mirrors that of an SQA question paper.
	Questions and scenarios are inclusive.

Administrative information

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History of changes

Version	Description of change	Date

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