



Higher Sociology

Course code:	C868 76
Course assessment code:	X868 76
SCQF:	level 6 (24 SCQF credit points)
Valid from:	session 2018–19

This document 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 candidates to complete the course is 160 hours.

The course assessment has two components.

Component	Marks	Duration
Component 1: question paper	80	2 hours and 40 minutes
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 National 5 Sociology course or equivalent qualifications and/or experience prior to starting this course.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ other qualifications in sociology, social studies, social sciences, or related areas◆ further study, employment and/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 time for learning, focus on skills and applying learning, and provide 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 study of sociology helps candidates to develop an understanding of society that goes beyond personal experience and common-sense explanations. Candidates are challenged to analyse human society, culture and identity, and social issues from different points of view. They are encouraged to use evidence when explaining 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 enables candidates to question commonly-held assumptions about society and to consider sociological explanations.

Candidates develop:

- ◆ an understanding of society through gaining knowledge and understanding of sociological perspectives, theories and concepts
- ◆ the ability to challenge common-sense explanations about human social behaviour using sociological understanding and evidence
- ◆ an understanding of cultural and social diversity, including the significance of relationships among individuals, groups and institutions in a changing social world
- ◆ an understanding of the role of sources of information, research evidence and research methods used in sociology
- ◆ research skills, including the ability to select, organise, analyse and evaluate information
- ◆ thinking and communication skills used in sociology

Who is this course for?

The course is suitable for all candidates who are interested in finding out more about the world we live in through investigating the relationship between society and the individuals who live in it.

Candidates should be interested in developing a deeper understanding of the social world in which we live. The course provides opportunities for candidates to develop confidence in researching and analysing evidence to explain human social experiences and social issues.

The course provides candidates who progress from National 5 Sociology with the breadth, challenge and application required to develop their research and thinking skills, and their knowledge of sociology.

Course content

The course consists of three areas of study:

Human society

Candidates develop an understanding of the sociological approach to studying human societies. This is achieved by developing and using analytical skills to investigate sociological approaches to studying society, the research methods used, and the relationships that exist among individuals, groups and institutions, as viewed from different sociological perspectives and theories.

Culture and identity

Candidates develop the ability to use sociological concepts, theories and research to investigate features of culture and identity in a changing social world. They consider their own and others' cultural experiences to develop an understanding of cultural identity and diversity.

Social issues

Candidates develop the ability to evaluate and apply sociological theories and to use research evidence to develop sociological understanding of contemporary social issues. They 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:

- ◆ understanding society by explaining sociological perspectives, theories and concepts
- ◆ explaining the sociological significance of relationships among individuals, groups and institutions in a changing social world
- ◆ explaining and evaluating research methods used in sociology
- ◆ using sociological theories to analyse and explain human social behaviour
- ◆ using knowledge and understanding to evaluate research and evidence to support explanations
- ◆ explaining differences between sociological and common-sense explanations of human social behaviour
- ◆ explaining the sociological significance of topics
- ◆ using research skills to investigate topics
- ◆ analysing and evaluating information including published research
- ◆ communicating sociologically-informed views

Skills, knowledge and understanding for the course assessment

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

Question paper

In the question paper, candidates describe, explain, analyse, evaluate and apply knowledge of sociology.

Human society
Perspectives: structural; action
Theories must include: consensus, conflict, feminism, functionalism, Marxism, symbolic interactionism, Weberism
Analysing relationships among individuals, groups and institutions by describing, explaining, and evaluating: <ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ sociological perspectives, concepts and theories◆ features, strengths and weaknesses of structural and action perspectives◆ features, strengths, weaknesses of consensus and conflict theories, feminism, functionalism, Marxism, symbolic interactionism and Weberism◆ similarities and differences between theories◆ common-sense and sociological approaches and the differences between them◆ the research process in sociology: theory, hypothesis, operationalisation, fieldwork, presentation of results◆ research methods which tend to generate quantitative data, which must include: surveys, questionnaires, structured interviews and official statistics◆ research methods which tend to generate qualitative data, which must include: unstructured interviews, participant observation, non-participant observation, case studies and focus groups◆ strengths and weaknesses of research methods used in sociology◆ choice of research method to use in particular contexts
Culture and identity
Perspectives: structural; action
Theories must include: feminism, functionalism, labelling, Marxism, symbolic interactionism
Applying structural and action perspectives and the sociological theories (feminism, functionalism, labelling, Marxism and symbolic interactionism) to describe, explain, analyse and evaluate: <ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ culture and identity◆ sociological concepts which must include: primary socialisation, secondary socialisation, identity, culture, subculture, diversity, power and status, prejudice and discrimination, giving examples

- ◆ the impact of socialisation on the formation of identity
- ◆ significance of power and status in terms of relationships, with reference to a culture and subculture
- ◆ aspects of identity which must include both age and gender
- ◆ aspects of culture which must include high culture and popular culture
- ◆ sociologically-relevant research and evidence for aspects of culture and identity, which must include at least two appropriate research studies:
 - 1 the main findings and conclusions of Cohen, S. (1972) *Folk Devils and Moral Panics*. MacGibbon and Kee, London — to explain deviance within a subculture
 - 2 one other research study, of the candidate's choice, to explain aspects of culture and identity
- ◆ practical, ethical and theoretical criteria used to evaluate sociological research

Social issues

Perspectives: structural; action

Theories must include: feminism, functionalism, labelling, Marxism, symbolic interactionism, Weberism

Applying structural and action perspectives and the sociological theories (feminism, functionalism, labelling, Marxism, symbolic interactionism and Weberism) to describe, explain, analyse and evaluate:

- ◆ social mobility
- ◆ sociological research related to social mobility including:
 - Goldthorpe, J. H. (1972) *Oxford Mobility Studies*. Oxford University, Oxford and
 - *Blanden, J. and Machin, S. (2008) *Up and Down the Generational Income Ladder in Britain: Past Changes and Future Prospects*. National Institute Economic Review, Sage publications
- ◆ a social issue other than social mobility, and two sociological research studies relating to this social issue
- ◆ practical, ethical and theoretical criteria used to evaluate sociological research

*Note: when the Blanden and Machin (2008) study is mentioned, candidates can refer to previous research which informed this study.

Assignment

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

- ◆ explaining the sociological significance of human social behaviour for a chosen topic
- ◆ using research skills to investigate topics
- ◆ analysing and evaluating information including published research
- ◆ communicating 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, and can be found on the SCQF website.

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

1.1 Reading

1.2 Writing

1.3 Listening and talking

4 Employability, enterprise and citizenship

4.6 Citizenship

5 Thinking skills

5.3 Applying

5.4 Analysing and evaluating

Teachers and lecturers must build these skills into the course at an appropriate level, where there are suitable opportunities.

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.

Course assessment structure: question paper

Question paper

80 marks

The question paper has 80 marks out of a total of 110 marks for the course assessment.

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

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

- ◆ understanding society by explaining sociological perspectives, theories and concepts
- ◆ explaining the sociological significance of relationships among individuals, groups and institutions in a changing social world
- ◆ explaining and evaluating research methods used in sociology
- ◆ using sociological theories to analyse and explain human social behaviour
- ◆ using knowledge and understanding to evaluate research and evidence to support explanations
- ◆ explaining differences between sociological and common-sense explanations of human social behaviour

The question paper has three sections:

Section 1: Human society

Section 2: Culture and identity

Section 3: Social issues

There are 30 marks available in the human society section and 25 marks each in the other two sections.

Each section of the question paper is made up of questions that sample from the skills, knowledge and understanding outlined in the 'Course content' section.

Candidates must respond appropriately to the command word used in questions. The command words most likely to be used are: describe, explain, analyse and evaluate. Candidates use or apply their knowledge of sociology, particularly where questions are in relation to a given scenario.

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 have 2 hours and 40 minutes to complete the question paper.

Specimen question papers for Higher 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 has 30 marks out of a total of 110 marks for the course assessment.

Assignment overview

The assignment assesses candidates' investigation and communication skills appropriate to sociology. Candidates carry out their own secondary research into a topic of choice and produce a report on their findings.

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

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

Setting, conducting and marking the assignment

Candidates have an open choice of topic for the assignment, within guidelines set by SQA. Evidence is submitted to SQA for external marking. All marking is quality assured by SQA.

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 beginning of the assignment so that they can carry out relevant investigation. Candidates should use sociological terminology as appropriate in their assignment. In the assignment, candidates:

- ◆ introduce their topic, explaining its sociological significance and giving a hypothesis
- ◆ use research skills to investigate their topic
- ◆ find appropriate sources of information on their topic — sources must not include the three pieces of research evidence used for the question paper: Cohen (1972); Goldthorpe (1972); and Blanden and Machin (2008)
- ◆ link research to their topic by analysing findings and evaluating sources
- ◆ draw conclusions about their research, linked to their topic and hypothesis

Assessment conditions

Time

The assignment 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 content of the course. The evidence should be completed in time to meet submission dates set by SQA.

Supervision, control and authentication

Teachers and lecturers must exercise their professional responsibility to ensure that evidence submitted by a candidate is their own work.

Teachers and lecturers should support candidates to choose a topic to investigate, based on a candidate's interest and available resources. Teachers and lecturers must ensure that whichever topic candidates choose, they are able to meet the requirements of the assignment. They must also ensure that the topic chosen conforms to the British Sociological Association's *Statement of Ethical Practice*.

Teachers and lecturers should put in place processes to monitor progress and ensure 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 the assignment has started.

Resources

There are no restrictions on the resources which candidates may have access to when undertaking the assignment; however the mandatory studies from the course may **not** be used: 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*.

Reasonable assistance

Candidates must undertake the assignment 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, or they may 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 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 a candidate has already produced or demonstrated, there is a danger that it becomes support for assessment, and teachers and lecturers need to be aware that this may be going beyond reasonable assistance.

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 evidence required for this assessment is a report of the findings from a candidate's sociological research.

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

Volume

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

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

Grading

Candidates' overall grades are 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.

- ◆ [Higher Sociology subject page](#)
- ◆ [Assessment arrangements web page](#)
- ◆ [Building the Curriculum 3–5](#)
- ◆ [Guide to Assessment](#)
- ◆ [Guidance on conditions of assessment for coursework](#)
- ◆ [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](#)

The SCQF framework, level descriptors and handbook are available on the SCQF website.

Appendix 1: course support notes

Introduction

These support notes are not mandatory. They provide advice and guidance to teachers and lecturers on approaches to delivering the course. Teachers and lecturers should read these in conjunction with this course specification and the specimen question paper and/or coursework.

Developing skills, knowledge and understanding

This section provides further advice and guidance about skills, knowledge and understanding that teachers and lecturers could include in the course. Teachers and lecturers have considerable flexibility to select contexts that will stimulate and challenge candidates, offering both breadth and depth.

The Higher Sociology course develops skills, knowledge and understanding which have a wide-ranging application in learning, life and work contexts.

The course has three areas of study: human society; culture and identity; and social issues.

The following table offers an outline of opportunities for the development of skills, knowledge and understanding in the **human society** area of study.

Examples of learning and teaching contexts	Skills, knowledge and understanding Analysing relationships among individuals, groups and institutions by describing, explaining and evaluating:	Opportunities for development
Explaining differences between sociological and common-sense explanations of human social behaviour.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ common-sense and sociological approaches and the differences between them 	<p>Developing a sociological imagination is at the core of this area of study. Using a variety of examples drawn from a range of contexts enables candidates to analyse and evaluate sociological and non-sociological explanations.</p> <p>Common-sense approaches rely on individualistic or naturalistic explanations. These are based on personal and anecdotal experiences, or a belief that there is a natural order to aspects of society.</p> <p>This should be contrasted with sociological explanations which are based on theories and rely on research.</p>

Examples of learning and teaching contexts	Skills, knowledge and understanding Analysing relationships among individuals, groups and institutions by describing, explaining and evaluating:	Opportunities for development
		Candidates should be able to explain differences in both an abstract sense and in particular examples, such as common-sense versus sociological explanations of poverty.
Understanding society by explaining sociological perspectives, theories and concepts.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ sociological perspectives, concepts and theories ◆ features, strengths and weaknesses of structural and action perspectives ◆ features, strengths, weaknesses of consensus and conflict theories, feminism, functionalism, Marxism, symbolic interactionism and Weberism ◆ similarities and differences between theories 	<p>This area of study offers scope to consider relationships at a number of different levels in society, and between levels. Candidates develop the ability to apply their understanding of sociological perspectives, theories and concepts to explain these complex human social relationships.</p> <p>Structural and action perspectives should be thought of as encompassing macro- and micro-sociology, respectively. Candidates should know and understand features of each perspective and should be able to give an evaluation of each. While theoretical examples can be used to illustrate these (for instance symbolic interactionism for the action perspective), candidates should also be able to talk specifically about the perspectives.</p> <p>There are five specific theories for this area of study.</p> <p>Candidates should be able to discuss conflict and consensus theories within the structural perspective. This should be able to be done in the abstract as well as with reference to individual theories.</p> <p>Candidates should demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the five theories, including an evaluation of the theories. They must compare and contrast the theories to identify similarities and differences, so that even contrasting theories may be said to share some similarity. This enables candidates</p>

Examples of learning and teaching contexts	Skills, knowledge and understanding Analysing relationships among individuals, groups and institutions by describing, explaining and evaluating:	Opportunities for development
		to display an in-depth understanding of theoretical sociology.
Explaining the sociological significance of relationships among individuals, groups and institutions in a changing social world.		Candidates can then use theories to explain the significance of the relationships that exist among individuals, groups and institutions. In particular, candidates should be able to use their knowledge of the sociological perspectives to explain the influence that individuals have on institutions and vice versa, which is one of the fundamental divides in sociology. Candidates should be able to illustrate this by giving explanations based on individual theories.
Explaining and evaluating research methods used in sociology.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ the research process in sociology: theory, hypothesis, operationalisation, fieldwork, presentation of results ◆ research methods which tend to generate quantitative data, which must include: surveys, questionnaires, structured interviews and official statistics ◆ research methods which tend to generate qualitative data, which must include: unstructured interviews, participant observation, non-participant observation, case studies and focus groups 	<p>This area examines research methods used in sociology and the research process. There are opportunities to carry out and evaluate small-scale research studies. If this approach is used, teachers and lecturers should ensure that these studies are appropriate and that ethical issues are considered.</p> <p>As well as understanding each of the stages, candidates should also be familiar with the four substages of operationalisation (defining concepts, choosing a sample, choosing a method and deciding on specific measurements). Candidates should be able to give examples of these stages by referring to actual research.</p> <p>There are nine different methods which candidates must understand and evaluate: surveys*, questionnaires, structured and unstructured interviews, participant and non-participant observation, official statistics, case studies, and focus groups. As well as the features, strengths and weaknesses of these methods, candidates should be</p>

Examples of learning and teaching contexts	Skills, knowledge and understanding Analysing relationships among individuals, groups and institutions by describing, explaining and evaluating:	Opportunities for development
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ strengths and weaknesses of research methods used in sociology 	<p>able to exemplify answers with actual research where possible.</p> <p>Candidates should explore the differences between, and uses of, quantitative and qualitative data. This should include the relative merits of each type of data and the specific research methods they relate to.</p> <p>*Note: although surveys and questionnaires are sometimes thought of as interchangeable, surveys can be conducted without the knowledge of the research subjects.</p>
Using sociological theories to analyse and explain human social behaviour.		<p>Candidates should be encouraged to share their understanding and become familiar with using terminology appropriate to sociological perspectives, theories and concepts. This helps to consolidate learning and develop confidence.</p> <p>Candidates should be able to apply the theories in actual contexts or scenarios so that they can demonstrate that they understand how the theories would explain given circumstances.</p>
Using knowledge and understanding to evaluate research and evidence to support explanations.		<p>There are opportunities to look at examples of data and research findings. Candidates should be encouraged to consider the source of evidence and the reliability of both the source and the evidence.</p> <p>An exercise that would help consolidate this would be to use extracts from research and ask candidates to identify the type of research, evaluate it and then use it to support a sociological explanation.</p>

Examples of learning and teaching contexts	Skills, knowledge and understanding Analysing relationships among individuals, groups and institutions by describing, explaining and evaluating:	Opportunities for development
Communicating sociologically-informed views.		<p>Candidates should develop skills of analysis and evaluation. There are opportunities to support candidates to be able to explain what is involved in analysis and evaluation, using appropriate language.</p> <p>Candidates should be encouraged to use appropriate language in discussions, presentations and written responses from as early as possible so that it becomes familiar.</p>

The following table offers an outline of opportunities for the development of skills, knowledge and understanding in the **culture and identity** area of study.

Examples of learning and teaching contexts	Skills, knowledge and understanding Applying structural and action perspectives and the sociological theories to describe, explain, analyse and evaluate:	Opportunities for development
<p>Explaining differences between sociological and common-sense explanations of human social behaviour.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ culture and identity ◆ sociological concepts which must include: primary socialisation, secondary socialisation, identity, culture, subculture, diversity, power and status, prejudice and discrimination, giving examples ◆ the impact of socialisation on the formation of identity ◆ significance of power and status in terms of relationships, with reference to a culture and subculture ◆ aspects of identity which must include both age and gender ◆ aspects of culture including high culture and popular culture 	<p>Common-sense attitudes and opinions are readily identifiable in relation to issues surrounding socialisation, culture and the formation of identity. Developing sociological understanding in order to challenge many taken-for-granted assumptions is a key aspect of the learning within this area.</p> <p>Candidates should thoroughly understand both culture and identity as sociological terms. In addition, candidates must explore socialisation, including primary and secondary, in depth. There are a number of opportunities to do this in the context of candidates' own experiences, and examples from contemporary media should be utilised.</p> <p>Candidates should examine different subcultures. There are various media that can assist with this, including documentaries as well as research studies.</p> <p>Candidates need to understand the meaning of diversity, power and status, and prejudice and discrimination both as terms and in context. Exemplification of the terms within the cultures and subcultures studied gives contextualisation to the learning. This is further enhanced by including sociological theory.</p> <p>In particular, power and status should be included as a concept when looking at culture and subcultures with</p>

Examples of learning and teaching contexts	Skills, knowledge and understanding Applying structural and action perspectives and the sociological theories to describe, explain, analyse and evaluate:	Opportunities for development
		<p>reference to relationships within the culture/subculture.</p> <p>Age and gender should be highlighted when looking at identity. Age can be considered both in terms of, for instance, youth subcultures and how people's identity changes as they age.</p> <p>High culture and popular culture can be examined as aspects of identity. Consider integrating this with power and status.</p>
<p>Understanding society by explaining sociological perspectives, theories and concepts.</p>		<p>When analysing culture and identity in a changing social world, candidates develop their understanding of a range of sociological perspectives, theories and concepts to understand the complex nature of society and develop their ability to apply sociological theory to explain a selected aspect of culture and identity.</p> <p>Theories must include: feminism, functionalism, labelling, Marxism, symbolic interactionism.</p>
<p>Explaining the sociological significance of relationships among individuals, groups and institutions in a changing social world.</p>		<p>Considering the extent to which we choose our social identities or whether they are constructed for us through the social processes that operate in society, provides a range of opportunities to explain the sociological significance of relationships among individuals, groups and institutions. Examining ways in which individuals' attitudes and behaviours have changed within society helps candidates to analyse ways in which social structures, institutions and processes have changed throughout time.</p>

Examples of learning and teaching contexts	Skills, knowledge and understanding Applying structural and action perspectives and the sociological theories to describe, explain, analyse and evaluate:	Opportunities for development
Explaining and evaluating research methods used in sociology.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ sociologically-relevant research and evidence for aspects of culture and identity, which must include at least two appropriate research studies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — the main findings and conclusions of Cohen, S. (1972) <i>Folk Devils and Moral Panics</i> — to explain deviance within a subculture — one other study, of the candidate's choice, to explain aspects of culture and identity ◆ practical, ethical and theoretical criteria used to evaluate sociological research 	<p>In this area of study there is a mandatory research study. Candidates should be able to apply this study to explain aspects of culture and identity by developing an understanding of the study's context, methodology, findings and its strengths and weaknesses. Candidates must also be able to do this for another study of their choice.</p> <p>Cohen's study incorporates many aspects of this area of study. The concepts of status and power are prominent themes, but age and gender can also be examined alongside the study, the events that led to it and the questions it raises about the nature of the media in society. The music and dress of the folk devils can be considered when looking at popular culture.</p> <p>When deciding which other study (or studies) to examine in depth, candidates should consider aspects such as power and status, and age and gender, and choose studies which are capable of encompassing these as well as the direct subject matter of the study.</p>
Using sociological theories to analyse and explain human social behaviour.		When analysing culture and identity in a changing social world, candidates apply sociological theory to explain a selected aspect of culture and identity.
Using knowledge and understanding to evaluate research and		Investigating aspects of culture and identity in a changing social world results in candidates giving a summarised sociological analysis. Their analysis could incorporate a range of

Examples of learning and teaching contexts	Skills, knowledge and understanding Applying structural and action perspectives and the sociological theories to describe, explain, analyse and evaluate:	Opportunities for development
evidence to support explanations.		<p>research evidence which they have evaluated and used to support their explanation and analysis. This could include research evidence relating to specific cultures and subcultures.</p> <p>Candidates must evaluate both the Cohen study and their other chosen study in order to fully appreciate the extent to which they make valid and reliable findings. They should examine the nature of research as well as the research itself.</p>
Communicating sociologically-informed views.		Throughout the area of study, candidates could be encouraged to develop their ability to communicate sociologically-informed views in a range of ways which could include role play, presentations, music, debates and a range of ICT.

The following table offers an outline of opportunities for the development of skills, knowledge and understanding in the **social issues** area of study.

Examples of learning and teaching contexts	Skills, knowledge and understanding Applying structural and action perspectives and the sociological theories to describe, explain, analyse and evaluate:	Opportunities for development
Explaining differences between sociological and common-sense explanations of human social behaviour.		Candidates can be encouraged to identify examples of common-sense explanations of social issues and to explain how these are challenged by sociological explanations.
Understanding society by explaining sociological perspectives, theories and concepts.		<p>In this area there is particular emphasis on sociological theories and the way in which they can be used to explain social issues. Making connections between theory, perspectives and concepts helps candidates to view the study of sociology in a more holistic way.</p> <p>The theories used in this area are feminism, functionalism, labelling, Marxism, symbolic interactionism and Weberism. All of these are present in other areas of study. In this area the emphasis is on what they can reveal about the social issues studied.</p>
Explaining the sociological significance of relationships among individuals, groups and institutions in a changing social world.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ social mobility ◆ a social issue other than social mobility 	<p>Using sociological theory to explain these relationships is a useful development of learning.</p> <p>Candidates can be encouraged to consider the relationship between the sources used to explain social issues and the institutions, groups or individuals that produce these sources.</p> <p>The selection of the second social issue is important as it should be one capable of being explained using the</p>

Examples of learning and teaching contexts	Skills, knowledge and understanding Applying structural and action perspectives and the sociological theories to describe, explain, analyse and evaluate:	Opportunities for development
		sociological theories in this area. Both of the social issues (social mobility and one other) should be understood by candidates in some depth, with contemporary knowledge of the issue which can support or challenge theoretical explanations.
Using investigation skills to find and evaluate sources of information and research studies.		Candidates can be introduced to a variety of general sources of information, for example reputable scholarly articles or web resources for government statistics. Candidates can work cooperatively to gather a selection of information relevant to the social issue.
Organising and evaluating information in sociology.		Sources of information can be organised in a number of ways including type of source, relevance to social issues, theoretical approach. Candidates can develop evaluative skills by forming conclusions about which sources offer the most meaningful explanation of the social issue.
Explaining and evaluating research methods used in sociology.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ sociological research related to social mobility including 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> ◆ two sociological research studies relating to this social issue (a social issue other than social mobility) 	<p>There are two mandatory studies for this area. Candidates should be able to analyse the mandatory social issue using these studies. Another two studies are needed for the other social issue. Candidates should be able to apply these studies to explain the relevant social issue by developing an understanding of the study's context, methodology, findings and its strengths and weaknesses.</p> <p>There is a minimum of four research studies which candidates must learn in this area of study. They must know the findings of each study along with an evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of the studies. The studies</p>

Examples of learning and teaching contexts	Skills, knowledge and understanding Applying structural and action perspectives and the sociological theories to describe, explain, analyse and evaluate:	Opportunities for development
		should also be able to be linked to the social issues and to the theories so that candidates can use the findings of the studies to support or challenge them.
Using sociological theories to analyse and explain human social behaviour.		<p>Using sociological theories and research evidence to explain a social issue enables candidates to analyse and explain a range of social behaviour.</p> <p>Candidates should apply the theories to the social issues in order to test their explanations. The research findings and other facts can be used to support or challenge these explanations.</p>
Using knowledge and understanding to evaluate research and evidence to support explanations.		<p>Using sources that are real examples of research as a basis for developing knowledge and evaluation of research methods is helpful in taking learning beyond a simple list of advantages and disadvantages.</p> <p>Candidates should be encouraged to weave the evidence through their theoretical explanations of the social issues. By doing this candidates can demonstrate a deep understanding of the social issues.</p>
Communicating sociologically-informed views.		<p>Candidates can be encouraged to use different communication skills to present arguments and findings. Using PowerPoint or other graphical presentation media to support a verbal presentation offers opportunities for candidates to develop effective presentation skills.</p> <p>Writing skills can be developed by using standard report or extended-response formats and standard referencing and bibliography styles.</p>

Examples of learning and teaching contexts	Skills, knowledge and understanding Applying structural and action perspectives and the sociological theories to describe, explain, analyse and evaluate:	Opportunities for development
		Discussing relative merits of theories and research evidence can enhance verbal communication skills.

Approaches to learning and teaching

Teachers and lecturers can use a wide variety of learning and teaching approaches to deliver the course. This part of the course support notes provides advice and guidance, and some examples of approaches.

At all times, teachers or lecturers should provide opportunities for personalisation and choice to ensure that learning is relevant and motivating. Learning should, where possible, be relevant to candidates' domestic and everyday life, their overall learning programme and/or work and leisure.

Although challenging preconceived ideas about the nature of society is at the heart of sociology, sensitivity must be exercised when dealing with opinions and beliefs.

Human society

Possible approaches to learning and teaching

Teachers and lecturers should provide a rich and supportive learning environment to enable candidates to achieve the best they can. This could include:

- ◆ development of critical thinking skills
- ◆ asking candidates to explain or show their thinking
- ◆ collaborative and independent learning
- ◆ discussion around new concepts and how they can be applied
- ◆ using technology where appropriate
- ◆ candidates planning and/or participating in real-life activities involving sociological research methods

Examples of learning and teaching contexts and opportunities

To evaluate the sociological approach to understanding society, teachers and lecturers can exemplify common-sense and sociological approaches using examples such as unemployment and/or poverty. Using a common-sense approach, unemployment and poverty could be seen as inevitable or due to individual faults; though a sociological approach could look at national and international economic policies and the relative power of those who take decisions which result in increased unemployment and poverty for others.

It may be useful to use a grid such as:

	Sociology	Common sense	
Characteristics		Individualistic	Naturalistic
Based on	theory, evidence, research	personal experience, anecdotes, opinion	beliefs, traditional views
Key features	power, agency, relationships, attempts to be objective	self, subjective	'factual'
Example: poverty	economic structure, power relationships, societal function	lazy, lack of personal responsibility	poor are always with us

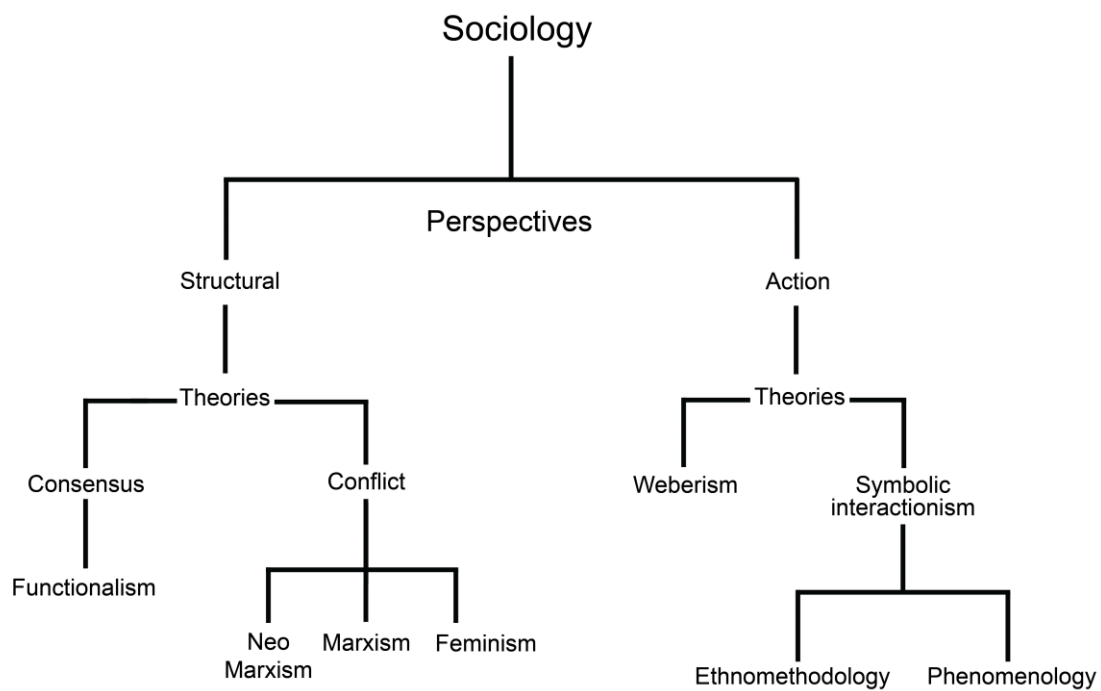
Research methods are crucial to understanding the sociological approach and should be considered as part of the examination of the nature of society.

The methods that generate quantitative data could be regarded individually and by looking at the commonality of empirical research. It is not necessary to explore positivism but this could be done here. Although surveys can often be viewed as synonymous with postal questionnaires (for example, the British Crime Survey/now Crime Survey for England and Wales) and structured interviews, they can be distinct and form a separate method, particularly when the subjects do not need to respond.

Methods that generate qualitative data are varied and there are many examples. Candidates could watch documentaries and use various ways of conducting unstructured interviews and focus groups.

Experiential learning by conducting mock research could be utilised. Actual examples of research which has already taken place could be used to explore ethics of research and the criteria of reliability, validity, time, cost, ease, sample size, depth, breadth or nature of enquiry. The research process could be examined here, highlighting the role of theory, hypothesis, operationalisation (including the four substages of operationalisation — choosing a method, defining concepts, setting measurements, selecting a sample), fieldwork and processing results.

To analyse the relationship of individuals, groups, institutions and societies from different sociological perspectives and theories, teachers and lecturers can introduce candidates to different strands in sociology, including perspectives and theories. The following diagram illustrates the relationship between perspectives and theories that may be used in Higher Sociology.



Note: not all of these theories are specifically required for the area of study or course.

Culture and identity

A holistic approach to learning and teaching would be appropriate. Opportunities to motivate candidates to understand complex or sensitive social issues linked to culture and identity, and to subsequently apply sociological theory to explain them, may be more easily done by candidates if they identify and investigate topics or themes of contemporary relevance themselves. Therefore, it would be useful for teachers and lecturers to find out specific issues or themes related to culture and identity that candidates have a particular interest in before delivering this part of the course. The learning and teaching related to sociological concepts, theories and specific research studies could then be more focused on topics of specific interest to the candidate or candidate group.

Possible approaches to learning and teaching

Teachers and lecturers should provide a rich and supportive learning environment to enable candidates to achieve the best they can.

A range of varied materials, resources and activities could be used to stimulate discussion. Teachers or lecturers should subsequently encourage interpretation and analysis of any materials sourced using sociological understanding.

The following are suggestions for stimulating discussion:

- ◆ using sociological understanding to stimulate discussion around the way in which socialisation processes impact on the formation of identity
- ◆ encouraging candidates to reflect on their own socialisation and cultural experiences and to explain them using sociological understanding
- ◆ using sociological understanding to stimulate discussion of the relationship between mainstream culture and subcultures in terms of power and status
- ◆ using sociological discussion to consider ways in which our social world has changed and continues to change and the impact this has on our understanding of culture and identity:
 - using these discussions to stimulate candidates' interest in investigating a range of sociological research studies on aspects of culture and identity
- ◆ deciding on a specific aspect of culture and identity (or a range of aspects within a class group) which candidates want to explore further
- ◆ encouraging candidates to apply sociological theory to analyse and explain the aspect of culture and identity that they have selected
- ◆ supporting candidates to select a particular aspect of culture and identity which they can explore more fully in terms of sourcing relevant research
- ◆ developing skills and strategies relating to planning, researching, collating and communicating information on candidates' selected aspect
- ◆ offering opportunities for independent learning but also for supportive and collaborative learning in the investigation of sociological research into aspects of culture and identity in a changing world
- ◆ using technology as appropriate to prepare a summarised sociological analysis of an investigation of culture and identity in a changing social world

Examples of learning and teaching contexts and opportunities

Candidates develop their understanding of the processes of primary and secondary socialisation and start to examine how aspects of the socialisation process impact on how a person forms their identity. Candidates begin to think about ways in which our social world is rapidly changing and the impact this has on the range of diverse identities that may be available to us. This provides good opportunities to explore the concepts of culture and identity from contrasting sociological perspectives, for example, are we shaped by the social world in which we live, or do we actually shape our own social worlds?

Candidates could examine and explain the relationship between mainstream culture and subcultures. This provides a focus for the development of skills in sociological analysis as candidates are given the opportunity to analyse ways in which power and status is manifested when exploring issues around culture, subculture and identity formation.

Candidates can select particular aspects of culture and identity which they wish to investigate further. Although it is expected that candidates are given the opportunity to gain knowledge relating to a range of aspects related to culture and identity as well as a range of contrasting sociological theories, candidates are expected to apply sociological theory in their sociological analysis of one selected aspect of culture and identity.

Candidates could be encouraged to develop skills in synthesis and evaluation when considering sociological research related to their investigation of culture and identity in a changing social world.

Candidates could present their summarised sociological analysis in a format of their choice, which may include an academic poster, an essay, a slideshow presentation or a short video. This could provide candidates with a range of opportunities to develop skills for learning, skills for life and skills for work in the areas of ICT, team-working and graphic communication.

Analyse culture and identity in a changing social world

Possible discussion and activities:

Discussion of candidates' socialisation experiences (norms, values, customs); sense of own identity; social identities linked to gender, age, disability, ethnicity, nationality, sexuality and social class; links to wider aspects of culture — popular culture, youth culture, high culture; widening cultural awareness and discussion through a range of stimulus material.

Encouraging consideration and critique of common-sense views, beliefs and attitudes by introducing more objective, sociological ways of interpreting and explaining the changing social world we live in. Reflecting on changes in norms, attitudes, values in our own families and culture within two or three generations. Emerging ideas of diverse multiple identities could also be discussed. Use of candidates' newly-acquired sociological understanding and concepts to re-evaluate and explain how socialisation processes impact on who we are and how this can change over time.

Discussion and activities based on exploring ideas of culture in terms of mainstream culture and subcultures could be based on a range of stimulating

resources. The opportunity to study aspects of culture and subcultures and the power differentials within and between different cultural groups may provide candidates with options to consider when selecting a specific aspect of culture and identity to investigate further.

A range of different aspects of culture and identity could be discussed in class in a general way with candidates being encouraged to select and investigate a particular topic of interest to them. Different sociological theories could be discussed and evaluated in relation to how effectively they explain or contribute towards an understanding of the selected topic. Teachers and lecturers could offer guidance and support in sourcing appropriate research into the selected topic.

All of these discussions, activities, investigation and thinking contribute towards candidates' understanding of culture and identity in a changing social world and could be used as contributory materials and/or evidence for their sociological analysis.

Social issues

The mandatory social issue is social mobility. Another social issue must also be studied. When choosing a social issue to study, the issue should be contemporary and relevant to the candidate. Resources should be available to support learning at this level.

For social mobility, candidates should be encouraged to recognise the nature of sociological thought, particularly that contrasting theories may offer different yet arguably valid explanations for social mobility. At Higher level candidates should be able to understand and express the complex nature of social mobility including the impact of inequality on life chances. Candidates should know and understand the two mandatory studies as well as the two chosen studies for the other social issue.

Centres who are teaching bi-level classes may wish to consider using differential achievement in education as the other social issue, as this is the mandatory issue at National 5.

Another example of a social issue that could be used is discrimination in the workplace. This can bring out discrimination based on:

- ◆ gender: larger companies in the UK now have to publish data on the gender pay gap, which provide good, detailed, up-to-date examples. Feminism would be an obvious choice for a theoretical starting point, perhaps including Marxist feminists which would lead on to Marxism. Contrast with functionalism
- ◆ disability: how much has legislation brought about change in the employment prospects and earning potential of disabled people? Labelling theory could be used here
- ◆ ethnicity: how much is race still a factor in determining promotion and salary? Are there differences among different ethnic minority groups? Is this a direct result of differential educational achievement or is there further disparity in the workplace? Investigate possible cultural considerations and stereotypes which could be linked with the culture and identity area. The charity, 'Business in the Community', publishes regular surveys on race in business, for example, Race at work survey 2018 (<https://race.bitc.org.uk>)

Social issues studied could be used as a starting point for candidates choosing their own social issue for the assignment.

Delivering the Higher Sociology course

Areas of study may be delivered in any order and they may be delivered sequentially or concurrently. There may be some benefit, however, in delivering at least part of human society first in order to provide candidates with an opportunity to familiarise themselves with a basic understanding of how sociological explanations differ from common-sense views.

Teachers and lecturers should introduce candidates to sociological language, concepts and theories in each area of study, and encourage them to use sociological terminology as much as possible when explaining and communicating their ideas. Three possible approaches to delivery are given below.

Approach 1

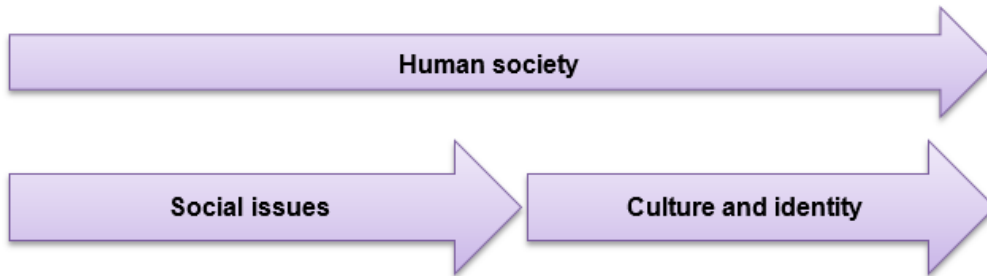


Adopting this approach to delivery, which begins with human society, enables candidates to develop an early understanding of the way in which sociology attempts to objectively explain aspects of the social world about which candidates already have opinions and experience. Introducing structural and action perspectives and theories as different ways of explaining the social world provides knowledge and understanding of different ways in which taken-for-granted assumptions can be challenged. This is reinforced when candidates are given the opportunity to find out about the role of sources of information, research evidence, and research methods used in sociology.

Having gained this underpinning knowledge, progressing on to culture and identity gives candidates a chance to apply sociological understanding to ideas related to cultural experiences and identity formation. Having studied human society, candidates should be able to investigate a range of diverse cultural processes and experiences, and to analyse them in an objective, sociologically-informed way that would avoid ethnocentric views or enable candidates to question or challenge them.

Having covered the previous two areas of study, candidates would then have the necessary skills, knowledge and understanding to select a social issue of interest to them and to use sociological theories and research studies to develop sociologically-informed conclusions about the selected issue. Building on a strong knowledge base from the previous areas, candidates could explain social issues by expanding and developing their understanding through research and investigation.

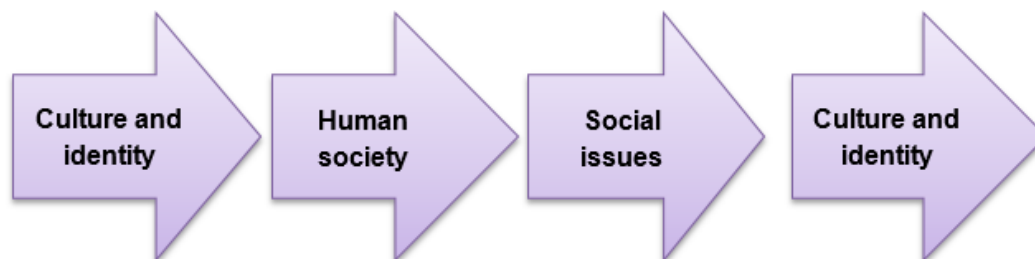
Approach 2



Following this approach to delivery supports opportunities for candidates to learn concurrently about sociological theory and the research process, while simultaneously adopting a topic or thematic approach to introducing and developing aspects of sociological analysis.

An advantage of this approach is that the relevance of a range of theories and research methods could be introduced to candidates in a flexible manner that could be responsive to their learning pace, style and topic choices in both social issues and culture and identity. This may help create a more stimulating learning environment in which candidates could be actively engaged to consider and reflect on issues of significance to them when applying and evaluating sociological perspectives, theories, concepts, research methods and studies relevant to the contemporary social world.

Approach 3



Approach 3 could be appropriate for groups of candidates with no prior knowledge of sociology. By introducing the idea of culture and identity at an early stage of the learning process, it provides teachers and lecturers with opportunities to encourage candidates to reflect on 'who they are' and 'why they are who they are'. Candidates can then be introduced to ideas around the socialisation process, such as norms, values, roles and the ways in which we learn to fit into our social world.

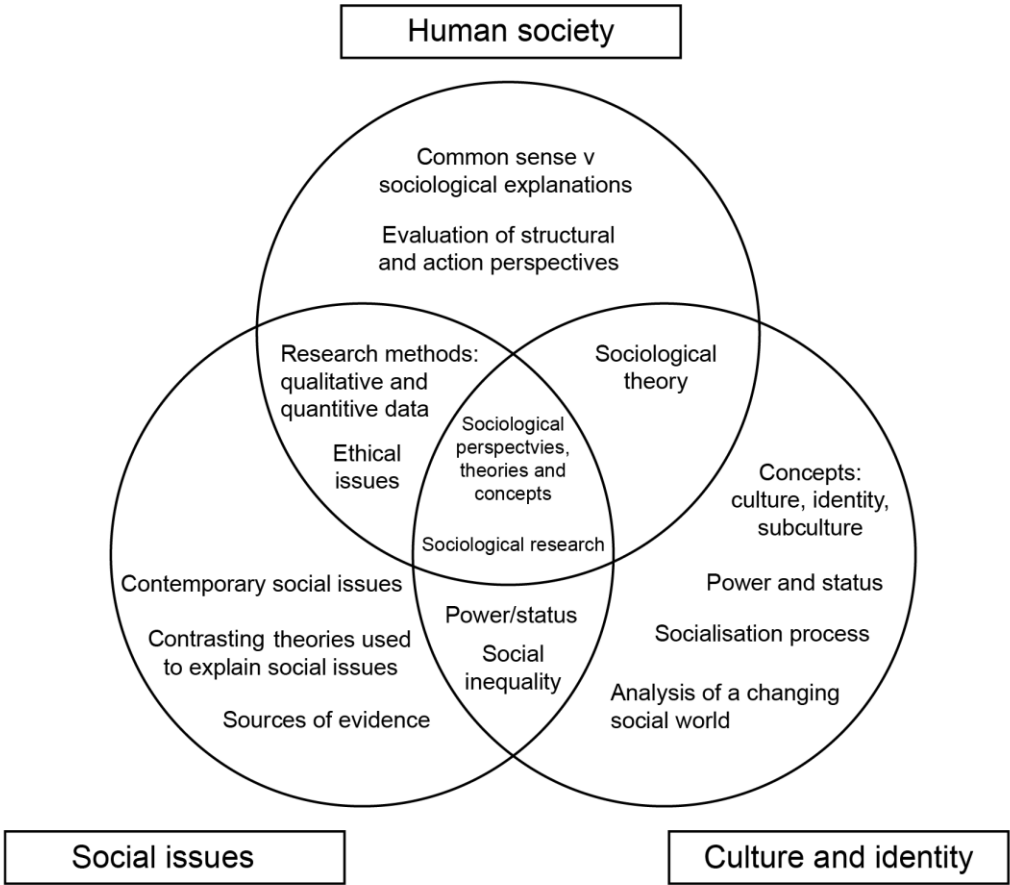
Learning about ways in which our socialisation and cultural experiences can shape our life chances then enables candidates to reflect on issues of power and status, social inequality and a range of related social issues. When exploring ideas of socialisation and identity formation, there are also opportunities to consider whether human behaviour is shaped by the society we live in or whether it is human behaviour that shapes society. This naturally leads into some of the key learning of the human society area of study, specifically structural and action perspectives (macro- and micro-sociology).

By returning to some of the introductory themes towards the end of sequential/topic/thematic delivery, candidates could be encouraged to reflect back on some taken-for-granted or common-sense assumptions that were evident when they first began the course.

Thematic delivery of areas of study

There is the potential for thematic delivery of topics across the course. This may suit the needs of candidates in terms of personalisation and choice and may suit teachers and lecturers in centres interested in offering more integrated and imaginative delivery.

The following diagram illustrates links between the sections that offer potential for thematic delivery.



Ideas for possible themes to provide opportunities for integrated learning could include:

- ◆ Theme: moral panics:
 - rising crime rates
 - teenage pregnancy
 - benefit fraud

Each of these subtopics, under the overall heading of moral panics, could be considered as social issues. The topics would provide plenty material to discuss across all sections relating to common-sense versus sociological explanations; quantitative data versus qualitative data; analysis based on both structural (consensus/conflict) and social action perspectives; issues of identity, culture and subculture; and discussions linked to social inequality, power and status, age and gender.

Sources of evidence from a range of media would be readily accessible to candidates in relation to a range of topics around the idea of moral panics. Sociological research into these issues should be relatively easily sourced and candidates could be supported by their teachers or lecturers to ensure that identified research and sources of information were appropriate for analysis and presentation. Comparing a range of media sources with more objective sociological research would provide good opportunities to challenge common-sense explanations. The mandatory study from the culture and identity area would be valuable here.

- ◆ Theme: health:
 - ideas related to the fact that health, illness and body image are social phenomena as well as biological concepts

Candidates could adopt a particular focus (such as obesity, disability or self-harming behaviour) and examine their selected theme using informed sociological understanding that is likely to challenge some taken-for-granted assumptions. This general theme would be likely to raise a wide range of social issues and concerns (such as 'postcode lottery' for medical care; the influence of the mass media and popular culture on identity formation and body image). This in turn would provide a wide range of opportunities for evaluating ways in which sociological perspectives, theories and concepts provide different ways of explaining these social issues.

As before, sociological research should be relatively easily sourced, and candidates could be supported by their teachers or lecturers to ensure that identified research and sources of information are appropriate for analysis and presentation.

A more detailed example of how a thematic approach to learning and teaching could be applied is outlined below in relation to the theme of child poverty.

Theme: child poverty	
Area of study	Suggestions for approaches to learning and teaching
Human society	<p>Common-sense versus sociological explanations: for example, a person putting forward a common-sense point of view might say that if children are living in poverty it is because their parents do not work. This would contrast with sociological evidence that more than half of all the children in low-income households have someone in their family doing paid work.</p> <p>Examining and evaluating quantitative and qualitative data on child poverty might include examples such as statistics from 'The Poverty Site' or the views of children and young people on poverty in Martin</p>

Theme: child poverty	
Area of study	Suggestions for approaches to learning and teaching
	<p>and Hart (2011) <i>Trying to Get By</i>, The National Foundation on Educational Research.</p> <p>Using structural and action perspectives and theories to explain issues relating to child poverty by examining the interrelationship between, and within, social institutions such as the family, education, government and the economy. Using this as a focus to highlight strengths and weaknesses of specific sociological theories in explaining (or tackling) child poverty.</p> <p>A comparison of the effectiveness of both perspectives in explaining child poverty could be presented.</p>
Culture and identity	<p>Investigating and explaining how children's experiences of poverty in terms of primary and secondary socialisation processes (family norms, values, roles, beliefs, patterns of behaviour, expectations and interactions in the education process, media representation, government policies) can shape their personal identities.</p> <p>Status and power in society are closely linked to our socio-economic positions. Children living in a culture of poverty are often disempowered and socially excluded not only in terms of their age but also their socio-economic positions. Research by Martin and Hart (2011) makes strong links between being poor and being bullied and also experiences of schooling being adversely affected for children from low-income families.</p> <p>The notion of youth deviance, gangs and subcultures is often associated with experiences of poverty. Power and status differentials between mainstream culture and subcultures associated with poverty could be examined. Sociological theory and appropriate research studies could be investigated to offer additional insight into this aspect of culture and identity.</p>
Social issues	<p>Child poverty could be the selected contemporary social issue which would provide opportunities to investigate multiple inequalities experienced as a result of poverty in childhood based on some of the ideas outlined above.</p> <p>Sourcing, describing and evaluating at least two research studies on child poverty would provide opportunities to compare research findings, practical and ethical issues.</p>

Overarching guidance

An awareness of equality and diversity issues is essential in sociology, and all materials used should be inclusive to reflect social and cultural diversity. Some topics may be sensitive for individual candidates, based on stages of development or personal experiences, therefore discretion and sensitivity should be shown in the selection and delivery of materials especially in the culture and identity and social issues areas. In discussions which may relate to health, relationships, identity, emotions or socio-economic status, teachers and lecturers should be alert to any signs of discomfort or distress.

The subject matter of sociology lends itself to a variety of delivery and investigation methods, including:

- ◆ candidate-centred problem-solving activities
- ◆ pair and group discussion
- ◆ considering sources of evidence
- ◆ analysis of real-life applications of theory
- ◆ collaborative learning
- ◆ ICT/web-based activities, as well as sourcing and evaluating more formal sociological research studies

Using a range of stimulus materials could be effective in highlighting contemporary issues as well as comparisons across cultures or throughout history in relation to a particular social issue or theme. Candidates should be given the opportunity to access, consider and evaluate evidence of both a quantitative and qualitative nature. Candidates could also be provided with opportunities to generate and analyse their own research data. If this approach is adopted, ethical issues must be addressed.

At Higher level, candidates should also be encouraged to understand the importance of acknowledging the source of all evidence they use in their investigations into social issues or topics. Opportunities to learn basic Harvard referencing could be incorporated.

Preparing for course assessment

Each course has additional time which may be used at the discretion of the teacher or lecturer to enable candidates to prepare for course assessment. This time may be used towards the end of the course, for integration, revision and preparation and/or gathering evidence for course assessment.

The Higher Sociology course assessment has two components: a question paper and an assignment. Teachers and lecturers should refer to this course specification for essential information on mandatory content required for course assessment and to the assignment assessment task.

Preparation for the question paper

The question paper assesses breadth and application of sociological skills, knowledge and understanding from across the course. Candidates need opportunities to write answers to questions, within time constraints. This can be practised through cooperative learning activities or by offering a practice question paper with opportunities to discuss the quality of answers.

Preparation for the assignment

The assignment requires candidates to use sociological skills, knowledge and understanding to investigate a topic in sociology. Detailed information is provided in the assignment assessment task.

Candidates should have opportunities to investigate topics within the course and to discuss their ideas with others to develop their understanding. Candidates need opportunities to develop skills in structuring extended-responses.

Ethical practice in sociology

There is no expectation that candidates conduct their own independent research. Learning and teaching approaches may include supporting candidates to carry out small-scale research activities.

The British Sociological Association (BSA) publishes a code of ethics for those undertaking sociological research. When students of sociology discuss or undertake research it is the teacher, lecturer or supervisor's responsibility to make certain that ethical standards are considered.

These notes give a brief outline of the ethical code of practice and some tips and examples to help practitioners remain within the guidelines. The full code of ethical practice can be found on the BSA website.

Notes for teachers and lecturers

- ◆ Teachers and lecturers are required to supervise candidates' work and make certain that it does not break the ethical guidelines of the BSA.
- ◆ The wellbeing of both candidates and research participants must be protected at all times.

Candidates and participants under age of 18

- ◆ Permission should always be gained from:
 - parents and carers (in all cases)
 - the young people themselves (in all cases)
 - teachers and lecturers or parents and carers (when research is outside the home)
- ◆ Candidates should be made aware of the potential for influencing children and young people. They must not therefore involve under 18s in any research topic that is either illegal or age restricted, for example, drug use, alcohol, smoking, violent or sexually explicit material, or sexual activity.
- ◆ It is difficult to gain informed consent from young children, so research should stop if there is any sign of distress or discomfort.

Brief outline of BSA ethical practice

- ◆ Sociological research is intended to contribute to the wellbeing of society.
- ◆ Researchers must safeguard those involved in research and those affected by it.
- ◆ Report findings accurately and truthfully.
- ◆ Consider effects and consequences of the work.
- ◆ Researchers should not carry out work they are not qualified to do, for example, asking questions of a personal nature that may cause distress unless trained to offer support.
- ◆ Research must be worthwhile.
- ◆ Methods should be appropriate.
- ◆ Researchers should clearly state the limits on their detachment from the topic or those involved.
- ◆ Researchers should keep safe and not take risks.

- ◆ Participants must not have their wellbeing compromised physically, socially or psychologically.
- ◆ Privacy and human rights should be protected.
- ◆ There should be awareness of disparities of power.
- ◆ Trust and integrity must be maintained.
- ◆ Freely given consent should be obtained.
- ◆ Participants should be told that they have a right to stop at any time or to refuse from the outset.
- ◆ Anonymity, privacy and confidentiality must be maintained where possible.
- ◆ Participants can refuse to be recorded on film, audio or video.
- ◆ Particular care should be given to children in research — consent from both child and parent and/or carer must be sought.
- ◆ Covert research should be avoided where possible. If necessary, permissions must be granted after the event.
- ◆ Social and cultural diversity must be respected.

Suggested guidelines for good practice

- ◆ Discuss ethics before work begins. Some good and bad examples can be helpful.
- ◆ Check research plans before candidates start work on a project.
- ◆ Create a checklist for candidates' research plans. This has the added benefit of training candidates in proper research protocol.
- ◆ Review candidates' work regularly.
- ◆ Encourage discussion of ethical issues in the report.

Developing skills for learning, skills for life and skills for work

Teachers and lecturers should identify opportunities throughout the course for candidates to develop skills for learning, skills for life and skills for work.

Candidates should be aware of the skills they are developing and teachers and lecturers can provide advice on opportunities to practise and improve them.

SQA does not formally assess skills for learning, skills for life and skills for work.

There may also be opportunities to develop additional skills depending on approaches being used to deliver the course in each centre. This is for individual teachers and lecturers to manage.

Some examples of potential opportunities to practise or improve these skills are provided in the following table.

Skills for learning, skills for life and skills for work	
1 Literacy	Opportunities in learning and teaching
1.1 Reading	<p>Through their reading of sources of information on a contemporary social issue as well as investigating and evaluating sociological research studies and methods, candidates develop skills in understanding and interpreting ideas, statistics, opinions and information presented in textual and numerical form.</p> <p>They become skilled in handling information to make evaluative judgements and conclusions in relation to sociological research.</p>
1.2 Writing	<p>Candidates develop the ability to create texts which communicate ideas, opinions, information and analysis to meet a range of specified purposes within the context of the course.</p> <p>This could be a written account comparing structural and action perspectives, or a written summary describing ways in which the processes of socialisation impact on the formation of individual identities.</p>
1.3 Listening and talking	<p>Candidates develop the skill of listening to ideas, opinions and information presented orally by other people for a specific purpose related to the course.</p> <p>They also become skilled and more confident in talking which involves their ability to orally communicate their ideas, opinions and information such as contributing and listening to a discussion of a social issue such as poverty, or contributing to a presentation on youth subculture.</p>
3 Health and wellbeing	Opportunities in learning and teaching
3.1 Personal learning	<p>Candidates develop skills in planning their learning through sourcing sociological research and sources of information on a specific social issue and a selected aspect of culture and identity in which they have an interest.</p> <p>Candidates have the opportunity for very meaningful personal learning by developing the skills of thinking objectively about their own life experiences and reflecting on ways in which this has had an impact on their beliefs, attitudes and sense of identity. Health and wellbeing skills related to personal learning and relationships can be developed through cooperative work.</p>

3 Health and wellbeing (continued)	Opportunities in learning and teaching
3.5 Relationships	<p>The opportunities for cooperative and collaborative learning throughout the course helps candidates develop various types of social and working relationships, and provides opportunities to practise a range of interpersonal skills.</p> <p>Opportunities to show respect and a sense of care for self and others are plentiful throughout the course as much of the learning and teaching in sociology can provide candidates with opportunities to consider their own and others' experiences of life, and to appreciate the importance of respecting the heritage and cultural identity of others.</p>
4 Employability, enterprise and citizenship	Opportunities in learning and teaching
4.6 Citizenship	<p>The course provides a range of opportunities to reflect on ways in which citizenship involves developing an understanding of the changing social world we live in.</p> <p>The course provides opportunities for candidates to understand more about social inequality; to develop an awareness of democracy; to become outward looking towards society while being able to recognise their personal role in the social world.</p> <p>The course also equips candidates to challenge taken-for-granted assumptions and to examine and reflect on their social world in a better informed, more objective way.</p>
5 Thinking skills	Opportunities in learning and teaching
5.3 Applying	<p>Applying involves the ability to use existing information to solve a problem in a different context, and to plan, organise and complete a task.</p> <p>Within the context of this course candidates are provided with a range of opportunities to develop this skill. This could include applying sociological theory to explain an aspect of culture and identity.</p>
5.4 Analysing and evaluating	<p>Analysing and evaluating involves the ability to identify and weigh up the features of a situation or issue and to use judgement in coming to a conclusion. It includes reviewing and considering any potential solutions.</p> <p>There are many opportunities for candidates to develop and demonstrate this skill within the course as they are required to evaluate a range of research methods, theories and studies used in sociology. Elements of this occur in the course and are integral to the course assessment.</p>

Appendix 2: glossary

This glossary clarifies the meaning of terms used in this course specification.

The glossary is organised as follows:

- ◆ definitions of action terms used in the course
- ◆ brief definitions of sociological terms used in each area of study

Note: the meaning of terms differ across disciplines and levels. This glossary is designed for Higher Sociology.

Action terms used in course

Analyse: give a detailed account of the main features of a concept, topic or issue including the relationship between the features.

Apply (two contrasting theories): make clear and direct use of the chosen theories to explain each social issue. Use knowledge of the main features of the theory in the explanation to demonstrate clear understanding.

Contrast: at Higher level this involves more than simply identifying differences. A more sophisticated explanation of the differences is required with reference to sociological concepts.

Describe: a clear account of the concept's main features.

Distinguish between: show a clear understanding of contrasting ideas or features. This may be demonstrated by giving examples of both common-sense and sociological explanations for a range of social issues or concepts.

Evaluate: identify strengths, weaknesses, similarities and differences and form a conclusion. Include validity and reliability when evaluating research methods. Real examples of the use of the method should be given.

Explain: demonstrate an understanding of a concept, topic or issue including its meaning and/or purpose in a report, presentation or extended-response.

Investigate: select the most appropriate information sources or studies from a wide range and use it in explanations.

Justify: give a clear account of the relevance of a chosen topic for research or explanation and support statements using evidence.

Note on sources of information: these should include a range of sources, for example, media reports, government statistics, sociological studies. At Higher level these may be sourced and selected by candidates.

Summarise: a concise account in which the process and outcomes are defined, and conclusions drawn.

Use perspectives or theories to give explanations: apply knowledge to specific social situations or roles and give examples of how the perspective or theory might explain them.

Sociological terms in each area of study

Human society

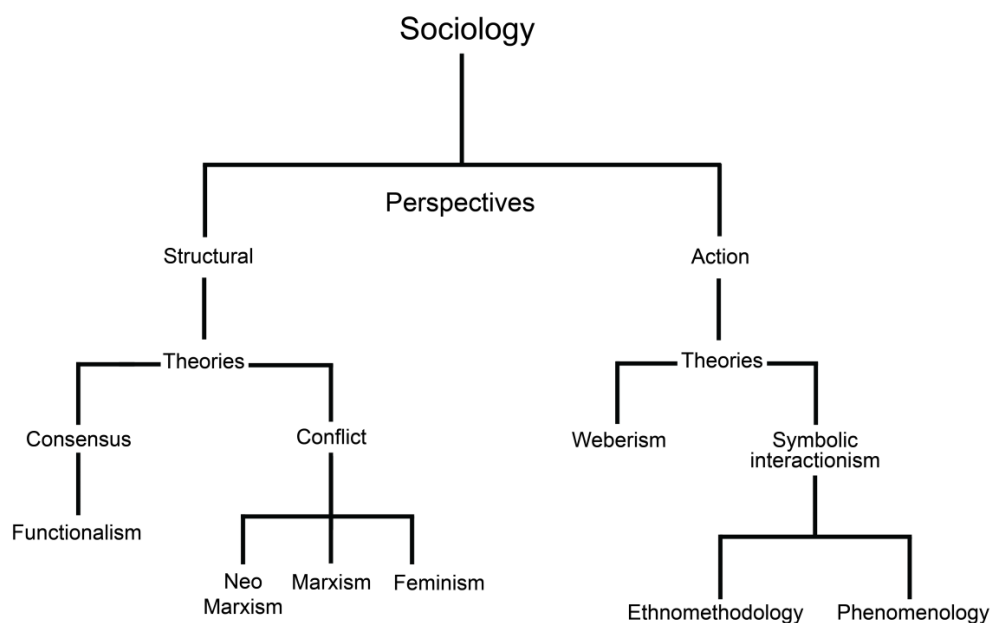
Action perspective: taking a bottom-up approach, this micro perspective studies the meanings individuals and society place on symbols such as words, signs, body language and social events. It tends to emphasise the individual's ability to control their own actions (personal agency) and to be influenced by personal interpretation or meaning.

Conflict theories: any theory that describes conflict between macro structures.

Difference between perspectives and theories: perspectives offer a view of the social world from a particular angle and theories give explanations for social behaviour and issues. Most theories arise out of perspectives. In Higher Sociology, the perspectives are structural and action, with theories falling under, or occasionally bridging these perspectives.

Functionalist or consensus theories: any theory that describes the way in which macro structures work towards a common aim, for example, change occurs when necessary or by common agreement.

This diagram is helpful in showing the connection between perspectives and theories. There is no expectation that all theories in this diagram should be covered.



Micro and macro perspectives: generally, action perspectives take a 'micro' (small-scale) view of society and structural perspectives take a 'macro' (large-scale) view.

Sociological approach: in contrast to common-sense explanations of the social world, the sociological approach uses sociological evidence and theory to explain the social world.

Sociological perspective: a way of looking at the world using sociological ideas and thinking.

Structural perspective: taking a top-down approach, the macro perspective theories see society as a whole structure within which different groups either work in consensus (for example, functionalist approach) or in conflict (for example, Marxist approach).

Theories: theories in sociology explain social behaviour and the social world by using perspectives and academic study. Theories are tested by sociological research and academic debate.

Explaining society: common-sense versus sociological approach

Common-sense explanations: explanations that come from a personal or shared understanding of social behaviour rather than from sociological evidence. At Higher level candidates must be able to challenge common-sense explanations by using sociological understanding and evidence. Common-sense explanations include:

- ◆ **Naturalistic explanations:** explanations of behaviour that claim that there is a natural or 'normal' way to behave, for example, it is only natural that men and women fall in love and marry.
- ◆ **Individualistic explanations:** social behaviour and particularly social problems are caused by individual traits, for example, poverty is caused by laziness, stupidity or failure to work hard in school.

Investigating society: research methods

Data: evidence gathered by undertaking research.

Qualitative data: data that is descriptive of people's experiences or feelings.

Quantitative data: data that is numerical or that can be counted and presented in numerical format.

Reliability: the likelihood that the same or very similar results would be gained if the research were replicated.

Research methods: recognised methods of gathering evidence to test a theory, surveys, interviews, observations, experiments.

Sociological theories:

- ◆ **Action theories:** symbolic interactionism, Weberism, labelling theory (for culture and identity and social issues).
- ◆ **Structural theories:** functionalism (consensus), Marxism, feminism (conflict theories).

Validity: the extent to which the study measures or investigates what it claims to.

Culture and identity

A changing social world: the social world changes over time. Sociologists are interested in observing and analysing the ways in which new behaviour patterns, attitudes and beliefs evolve as societies develop.

Agents of socialisation: the family is the primary agent of socialisation where an infant learns the basics of social behaviour, for example, eating, toileting, dressing and cleanliness. Secondary agents of socialisation include education, peer groups, religious organisations, the media and workplaces. At Higher level the interconnection between different agents of socialisation could be explored, including the formation of identity.

Cultural diversity: the co-existence in society of a mainstream culture with other subcultures. Respecting and valuing cultural diversity is the opposite of ethnocentrism.

Culture: beliefs, behaviours and shared characteristics of a particular society. Cultural aspects include music, literature, styles or modes of dress, behaviour, rules, institutions (for example, family, religion, work, health care), language, values and norms. Culture may also be used to describe these characteristics within a group in society (a subculture), for example, the culture of the Bangladeshi community within the UK.

Ethnocentrism: the tendency to judge other cultures and norms based on one's own cultural system, making the assumption that one's own culture is 'normal' or superior and others are strange, wrong or inferior.

Identity: in sociology, identity refers to distinctive characteristics belonging to an individual or group of individuals in a particular social category or group. It describes a person's sense of group affiliation, for example, 'national identity', 'religious identity' or 'cultural identity'. Identity is formed through socialisation and identification with people and groups that are significant to the individual (significant others).

Norms: rules of behaviour and ideas that are considered 'normal' within a particular social group or culture. Norms tend to reflect the values of the group.

Power: the ability to control one's environment and the behaviour of others. Power can be held in a range of ways, for example, gender power, roles that hold authority, personal charisma, social class, expertise, moral or religious persuasion and force.

Primary sources: data collected by the researcher and their team using research methods.

Roles: a set of expected behaviours and actions based on a particular social position or status. Individuals normally have a number of different social roles that demand different behaviours or attitudes. We become adept at moving from one role to another over the course of days and throughout a lifetime, for example, a woman may be a mother, sister, daughter, teacher, manager, consumer, team member, committee member and friend. In each of these roles she will behave differently and will shift from one to another without difficulty.

Secondary sources: information not personally collected by the researcher.

Social group: any group of people that interact and identify with one another and share similar characteristics or norms.

Socialisation: the process by which individuals learn the norms and values of their culture and expected behaviours within these norms. There are various agencies of socialisation at work in this process.

Sources: information relevant to the given topic. These can be selected from, for example, media articles, books, diaries, government records, official documents and sociological studies.

Status: social status gives prestige in the social world. Status could include educational status or expertise, celebrity status and economic status. The connection between power and status should be explored.

Subculture: a culture within a broad or mainstream culture that has some different beliefs, values or practices. One example of a subculture is the youth subculture within which there are a variety of smaller subcultures. Subcultures may emerge from the dominant culture as a 'counter cultural' movement.

Values: shared ideas within a social group or culture about what is right, good, fair and just. In a capitalist society material success is valued. This value is not shared by all cultures.

Social issues

Contemporary social issue: an issue of current interest or relevance.

Multiple inequalities: when the impact of one area of inequality causes or worsens other inequalities, for example, low income is related to poor health and is more common in areas of poor housing where a larger number of ethnic minorities may be living. These issues may be linked to culture and identity.

Note on sources of information: should include a range of sources, for example, media reports, government statistics, sociological studies. At Higher level these may be sourced and selected by candidates.

Social mobility: the ability of individuals to change their position within a social hierarchy, particularly social class.

Administrative information

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History of changes

Version	Description of change	Date
2.0	Course support notes added as appendix.	August 2018

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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