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Important information

Accreditation period

Units 1–4: 1 January 2024 – 31 December 2028

Implementation of this study commences in 2024.

Other sources of information

The [*VCAA Bulletin*](https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/news-and-events/bulletins-and-updates/bulletin/Pages/index.aspx) is the only official source of changes to regulations and accredited studies. The Bulletin also regularly includes advice on VCE studies. It is the responsibility of each VCE teacher to refer to each issue of the Bulletin. The Bulletin is available as an e-newsletter via [free subscription](https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/Footer/Pages/Subscribe.aspx) on the VCAA website.

To assist teachers in developing courses, the VCAA publishes online [Support materials](https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/curriculum/vce/vce-study-designs/sociology/Pages/Index.aspx) (incorporating the content previously supplied in the *Advice for teachers*).

The current [*VCE Administrative Handbook*](https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/administration/vce-vcal-handbook/Pages/index.aspx) contains essential information on assessment processes and other procedures.

VCE providers

Throughout this study design the term ‘school’ is intended to include both schools and other VCE providers.

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Introduction

Scope of study

Sociology focuses on the study of human behaviour and social interaction to understand how societies are organised, develop and change. There is no single sociological perspective, rather, there are several theories that offer different ways of understanding human society. Sociologists use these theories and frameworks in a complementary way to attempt to objectively examine social issues and explain concepts. In VCE Sociology students examine key theories regarding family, deviance, ethnicity, community and social movements.

Understanding society from a sociological perspective involves the use of what the sociologist Charles Wright Mills (1959) described as a sociological imagination, that is, a constantly critiquing mindset. In VCE Sociology students learn about and apply the sociological imagination by questioning their assumptions and reflecting on their understandings and ideas about social relations.

Sociology draws on scientific method in the exploration of social relationships and the outcomes of social activities. The scientific method is a systematic process applied to research questions and problems in an attempt to achieve objective observation, collection and analysis of data. Sociologists work to develop a reliable and valid body of knowledge based on research. In doing so, they adhere to various ethical codes of conduct. The primary goal of research ethics is to protect the wellbeing of the groups and individuals with whom sociologists work. There are many different ways that students can gather information for analysis in the course of their study, such as case studies, surveys and participant observation. As students gather and use sources of evidence, they explore and apply the Australian Sociological Association’s guidelines for conducting research.

Rationale

The study of VCE Sociology assists in the development of an appreciation of cultural diversity, and in an understanding of human behaviour and social structures. Further, it directs students’ attention to how aspects of society are interrelated, as well as to the causes and impacts of social change.

VCE Sociology provides valuable knowledge and skills for participation in everyday life. It develops a capacity for detailed observation of social patterns and group behaviour, and encourages students to become aware of and to think about daily life and activities, as well as wider social issues, from a sociological perspective. This study broadens students’ insights into key sociological frameworks and social institutions, enabling them to pursue further formal study at a tertiary level or in vocational education and training settings.

The study of VCE Sociology can lead to tertiary pathways related to work with social groups and social processes, such as in culture resource management and community development, or work with minority and ethnic groups. It can lead to work in fields that address issues such as crime and substance abuse, youth and family matters, industrial relations, social justice and social issues related to healthcare. The study of VCE Sociology helps develop social research skills, including: creating and conducting surveys, collecting data and conducting interviews and fieldwork, including the analysis, interpretation and presentation of the information collected.

Aims

This study enables students to:

* understand the nature of sociology as a study of human groups and social behaviour
* apply key sociological concepts, theories and methods to social life in Australian society and to global contexts
* develop an understanding of social institutions and change through comparative perspectives
* develop a capacity to undertake analysis and evaluation from a sociological perspective
* develop social awareness and an ability to contribute to contemporary debate.

Structure

The study is made up of four units.

* Unit 1: Youth and family
* Unit 2: Deviance and crime
* Unit 3: Culture and ethnicity
* Unit 4: Community, social movements and social change.

Each unit deals with specific content contained in areas of study and is designed to enable students to achieve a set of outcomes for that unit. Each outcome is described in terms of key knowledge and key skills.

Entry

There are no prerequisites for entry to Units 1, 2 and 3. Students must undertake Unit 3 and Unit 4 as a sequence. Units 1–4 are designed to the equivalent standard of the final two years of secondary education. All VCE studies are benchmarked against comparable national and international curriculum.

A glossary defining terms used across Units 1–4 in the *VCE Sociology Study Design* is included in the [Support materials](https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/curriculum/vce/vce-study-designs/sociology/Pages/Index.aspx)*.*

Duration

Each unit involves at least 50 hours of scheduled classroom instruction.

Changes to the study design

During its period of accreditation minor changes to the study will be announced in the [*VCAA Bulletin*](https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/news-and-events/bulletins-and-updates/bulletin/Pages/index.aspx). The Bulletin is the only source of changes to regulations and accredited studies. It is the responsibility of each VCE teacher to monitor changes or advice about VCE studies published in the Bulletin.

Monitoring for quality

As part of ongoing monitoring and quality assurance, the VCAA will periodically undertake an audit of VCE Sociology to ensure the study is being taught and assessed as accredited. The details of the audit procedures and requirements are published annually in the [*VCE Administrative Handbook*](https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/administration/vce-vcal-handbook/Pages/index.aspx). Schools will be notified if they are required to submit material to be audited.

Safety and wellbeing

It is the responsibility of the school to ensure that duty of care is exercised in relation to the health and safety of all students undertaking the study.

During the course of this study, students may undertake primary research. There are many areas of ethical concern when undertaking research, including the need for professional integrity, recommendations to protect research participants and the responsibilities of student researchers. The [Australian Sociological Association (TASA)](https://www.tasa.org.au/) has established a formal set of ethical guidelines for conducting research. The following recommendations are particularly important for the study of VCE Sociology:

* Treating participants with respect.
* Putting methods in place to prevent harm to participants.
* Establishing informed consent procedures, including making explicit the purpose, nature and implications of the study.
* Ensuring participants are aware of their rights, including voluntary participation and withdrawal rights.
* Ensuring the confidentiality and/or anonymity participants.
* Reporting results honestly.
* Debriefing participants and making the results available to the participants.

When it is known that representations contain names, images, voices or audiovisual recordings of a deceased Indigenous Australian person, appropriate warning and regard should be shown. While this does not apply to all Australian Indigenous cultures, students are nevertheless required to be respectful of cultural practice when examining Australian Indigenous representations.

The [Commonwealth Office of the Australian Information Commissioner](https://www.oaic.gov.au/) is an information and advice portal, and includes information on privacy principles and the Privacy Act.

Employability skills

This study offers a number of opportunities for students to develop employability skills. The [Support materials](https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/curriculum/vce/vce-study-designs/sociology/Pages/Index.aspx) provide specific examples of how students can develop employability skills during learning activities and assessment tasks.

Legislative compliance

When collecting and using information, the provisions of privacy and copyright legislation, such as the Victorian *Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014* and *Health Records Act 2001*, and the federal *Privacy Act 1988* and *Copyright Act 1968*, must be met.

Child Safe Standards

Schools and education and training providers are required to comply with the Child Safe Standards made under the Victorian *Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005*. Registered schools are required to comply with *Ministerial Order No. 1359 Implementing the Child Safe Standards – Managing the Risk of Child Abuse in Schools and School Boarding Premises*. For further information, consult the websites of the [Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority](https://www.vrqa.vic.gov.au/childsafe/Pages/Home.aspx), the [Commission for Children and Young People](https://ccyp.vic.gov.au/) and the [Department of Education](https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/child-safe-standards/policy).

Assessment and reporting

Satisfactory completion

The award of satisfactory completion for a unit is based on the teacher’s decision that the student has demonstrated achievement of the set of outcomes specified for the unit. Demonstration of achievement of outcomes and satisfactory completion of a unit are determined by evidence gained through the assessment of a range of learning activities and tasks.

Teachers must develop courses that provide appropriate opportunities for students to demonstrate satisfactory achievement of outcomes.

The decision about satisfactory completion of a unit is distinct from the assessment of levels of achievement. Schools will report a student’s result for each unit to the VCAA as S (satisfactory) or N (not satisfactory).

Levels of achievement

Units 1 and 2

Procedures for the assessment of levels of achievement in Units 1 and 2 are a matter for school decision. Assessment of levels of achievement for these units will not be reported to the VCAA. Schools may choose to report levels of achievement using grades, descriptive statements or other indicators.

Units 3 and 4

The VCAA specifies the assessment procedures for students undertaking scored assessment in Units 3 and 4. Designated assessment tasks are provided in the details for each unit in VCE study designs.

The student’s level of achievement in Units 3 and 4 will be determined by School-assessed Coursework (SAC) as specified in the VCE study design, and external assessment.

The VCAA will report the student’s level of achievement on each assessment component as a grade from A+ to E or UG (ungraded). To receive a study score the student must achieve two or more graded assessments in the study and receive an S for both Units 3 and 4. The study score is reported on a scale of 0–50; it is a measure of how well the student performed in relation to all others who completed the study. Teachers should refer to the current [*VCE Administrative Handbook*](https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/administration/vce-vcal-handbook/Pages/index.aspx) for details on graded assessment and calculation of the study score.

Percentage contributions to the study score in VCE Sociology are as follows:

* Unit 3 School-assessed Coursework: 25 per cent
* Unit 4 School-assessed Coursework: 25 per cent
* end-of-year examination: 50 per cent.

Details of the assessment program are described in the sections on Units 3 and 4 in this study design.

Authentication

Work related to the outcomes of each unit will be accepted only if the teacher can attest that, to the best of their knowledge, all unacknowledged work is the student’s own. Teachers need to refer to the current [*VCE Administrative Handbook*](https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/administration/vce-vcal-handbook/Pages/index.aspx) for authentication rules and strategies.

Unit 1: Youth and family

In this unit, students use sociological methodology to explore the social category of youth and the social institution of family. Sociologists draw on methods of science to understand how and why people behave the way they do when they interact in a group. Sociology attempts to understand human society from a holistic point of view, including consideration of society’s composition, how it is reproduced over time and the differences between societies. When sociologists investigate a topic, they attempt to do so with a reflective, critical mindset. Sociologists are guided by theories, or frameworks, to explain and analyse how social action, social processes and social structures work.

In Area of Study 1, students explore the way youth is constructed as a social category, in the light of differing experiences of young people. Students examine how and why the experience of being young differs across time and space. They examine a range of factors that lead to different experiences of youth, as well as the potential negative impacts of homogenous categorisation, such as stereotypes of young people in a context characterised by a rich diversity in the ways young people live.

In Area of Study 2, students investigate the social institution of the family. In a multicultural society like Australia, different communities have different kinds of families and experiences of family life. Students explore various factors that influence the diversity of these experiences such as demographic shifts, as well as cultural, economic, technological and social developments. A range of theoretical approaches are used by sociologists to explain the purpose and experiences of family life, including functionalist and feminist approaches. Comparative methodologies also enable comparison of family types and family experiences across time and space.

Students draw on quantitative and qualitative sources in their study. These sources may be drawn from secondary sources and from primary research undertaken by the student. The Safety and wellbeing section on [page 7](#Safety) contains advice for the conduct of primary research.

Area of Study 1

Category and experience of youth

In this area of study, students are introduced to the discipline of sociology and the nature of sociological inquiry through the study of youth. This includes an introduction to the sociological imagination, a critical thinking tool used to explore the social world from multiple points of view, free from assumption and bias. The sociological imagination, a term coined by Charles Wright Mills (1959), allows us to make links between personal behaviours and public issues. Additionally, the Australian sociologist Evan Willis suggests that the sociological imagination is best put into practice by addressing four interrelated facets of any social phenomena: historical, cultural, structural and critical factors.

The experience of being young has varied and continues to vary across time as well as across space; for example, the experience of being young in an isolated rural environment is different from that of being young in a large city. In their exploration of youth, students consider examples from Australia and, where useful in providing a comparative perspective, examples from other societies.

Students examine how Australians have thought about youth as a social category, and the range of experiences of young people. The concept of a social category refers to a group of people who share at least one similar characteristic, but who do not necessarily interact with each other. For example, grouping based on age or gender-based attributes. Students consider a range of factors that influence the lives of young people. These may include cultural factors such as ethnicity, religion, gender roles and coming of age rituals; social factors such as age, class, residential location, gender, sexual orientation, parental relationships, peer pressure and participation in sub-cultures; economic factors such as unemployment, education, demographic shifts and intergenerational inequity; and technological factors such as the introduction of new technologies, use of information and communications technology and social media and participation in online communities.

Students examine how social categories are used to convey ideas about young people and how the definitions of these categories have changed over time. In their examination of the concept and experience of youth, they explore media representations across print, digital and social media. Students consider the types, accuracy and impact of these representations, including instances of stereotyping, prejudice and discrimination.

Outcome 1

On completion of this unit the student should be able to describe the nature of sociological inquiry and discuss youth as a social category.

To achieve this outcome the student will draw on key knowledge and key skills outlined in Area of Study 1.

Key knowledge

* the nature of sociological inquiry:
* the observation, collection and analysis of data
* how sociologists use ethical methodologies to study human behaviour
* the use of the sociological imagination
* the social category of youth and how the definition has changed over time
* representations of youth in the media
* cultural, social, economic and technological factors leading to differences in the experience of being young.

Key skills

* explain and apply sociological concepts
* describe the nature of sociological inquiry
* discuss the concept of youth as a social category
* explain how the definition of youth has changed over time
* identify and analyse representations of youth in the media
* identify and explain factors leading to different experiences of being young
* gather and use a variety of relevant source materials to support observation and analysis
* evaluate sources and critically reflect on their own and others’ approaches to understanding the social world
* synthesise evidence to draw conclusions.

Area of Study 2

The family

In this area of study, students explore different definitions of the family and how families have changed over time. They consider the dynamic nature of the definition of family. In doing so, they explore various family forms as categorised by the Australian Bureau of Statistics, including couples with dependants, couples only, one parent families, sibling groups and multi-generational families. Students are introduced to comparative perspectives as a methodology in sociology. They apply this methodology to the experience of family and consider a range of experiences of family life that can be found in different cultures and societies, as well as consider key influences on family life and family as a social institution. As students investigate issues relating to the changing nature of family, they may relate this to functionalist and feminist views of the family.

This exploration of the family may involve questions such as: What varieties of family forms are found in different cultural groups? Is there a single universal family type? What role does family play as a social institution in terms of influencing the values and behaviours of family members? Students explore issues around traditional and non-traditional forms of the family and gender roles within the family. In their exploration, they analyse media representations across print, digital and social media.

Students explore key developments influencing contemporary family life; for example, divorce rates, increasing size and ageing of the population, changes to traditional gender roles, and the growth in single parent families and childless households. They explore the influence of government policy and assistance on the experience of family.

Outcome 2

On completion of this unit the student should be able to analyse the institution of family and the developments influencing the experience of family.

To achieve this outcome the student will draw on key knowledge and key skills outlined in Area of Study 2.

Key knowledge

* the sociological concept of an institution and the place and role of family as a social institution
* the social construct of family, including how the concept has changed over time
* contemporary family compositions
* the use of sociological theories and perspectives to explain concepts and behaviours
* functionalist and feminist views of family
* comparative perspectives as a methodology in sociology, including the experience of families in Australia compared with families in other societies
* key developments influencing the experience of contemporary family life such as demographic shifts, as well as cultural, economic, technological and social developments
* representations of family in the media
* the influence of government policy and government assistance on the experience of family.

Key skills

* explain and apply sociological concepts
* explain the functionalist and feminist views of family
* explain comparative perspectives as a methodology in sociology and apply it to the analysis of family
* analyse how key developments have influenced the experience of family life
* identify and analyse representations of family in the media
* explain the influence of government policy and government assistance on the experience of family
* gather and use a variety of relevant source materials to support observation and analysis
* evaluate sources and critically reflect on their own and others’ approaches to understanding the social world
* synthesise evidence to draw conclusions.

Assessment

The award of satisfactory completion for a unit is based on whether the student has demonstrated the set of outcomes specified for the unit. Teachers should use a variety of learning activities and assessment tasks that provide a range of opportunities for students to demonstrate the key knowledge and key skills in the outcomes.

The areas of study, including the key knowledge and key skills listed for the outcomes, should be used for course design and the development of learning activities and assessment tasks. Assessment must be a part of the regular teaching and learning program and should be completed mainly in class and within a limited timeframe.

All assessments at Units 1 and 2 are school-based. Procedures for assessment of levels of achievement in Units 1 and 2 are a matter for school decision.

For this unit students are required to demonstrate two outcomes. As a set these outcomes encompass the areas of study in the unit.

Suitable tasks for assessment in this unit may be selected from the following:

* a case study involving primary research
* an extended response
* a film analysis
* a media analysis
* a multimedia presentation
* a representation analysis
* a research report
* a selection of structured questions requiring short-answer responses.

Where teachers allow students to choose between tasks, they must ensure that the tasks they set are of comparable scope and demand.

Unit 2: Deviance and crime

In this unit, students explore the concepts of deviance and crime. The study of these concepts from a sociological perspective involves ascertaining the types and degree of rule-breaking behaviour, examining traditional views of criminality and deviance and analysing why people commit crimes or engage in deviant behaviour. It also involves consideration of the justice system, how the understanding of crime and deviance has changed over time, and the relationship between crime and other aspects of a society, such as age and gender.

In Area of Study 1, students explore the concept of deviance. There are different explanations of what constitutes deviant behaviour. Generally, it is defined as involving actions that are considered to be outside the normal range of behaviour according to the majority of members of a society, or more formally, the violation of social norms. Students investigate the functionalist, social control and labelling theories of deviance.

Students also explore the phenomenon known as moral panic. This refers to an intense emotional reaction from society (usually communicated through the mass media) to an issue that is perceived to threaten the social order.

In Area of Study 2, students investigate crime and punishment. They explore patterns of crime relating to age, gender and country of birth and consider the significance of a range of factors that may lead people to commit crimes such as financial situation and access to resources and employment, addiction, mental health and wellbeing issues, abuse, neglect, peer pressure and rebellion. Students explore different methods of punishment and the extent to which each of these methods serves the aims of punishment, which may include retribution, just punishment, deterrence, denunciation, rehabilitation, incapacitation, societal protection and restoration.

Students may draw on primary and secondary research to inform their understanding of deviance and crime.

Area of Study 1

Deviance

In this area of study, students focus on the concept of deviance, including how what is considered deviant may differ according to age and social status and across time and space. They learn about the meaning of deviance, how sociologists explain deviant behaviour and the impact of moral panic on those considered deviant.

Students explore three perspectives that sociologists have established to explain deviance: Emile Durkheim’s functionalist theory, Travis Hirschi’s elaboration of social control theory and Howard S. Becker’s labelling theory. Students also identify examples of positive deviance.

Students develop an understanding of Stanley Cohen’s theory of moral panic, where a condition, episode, person or group emerges to become defined as a threat to societal values and interests. According to Cohen, there are five sequential stages of a moral panic, with the mass media being a key agent in the exaggeration and distortion of messages. Commonly, moral panics relate to the behaviours of young people and sometimes these can be associated with behaviour or activities identified as deviant.

Outcome 1

On completion of this unit the student should be able to analyse a range of sociological theories explaining deviant behaviour and the impact of moral panic on those considered deviant.

To achieve this outcome the student will draw on key knowledge and key skills outlined in Area of Study 1.

Key knowledge

* the sociological concept of deviance:
* the relationship between deviance and social norms
* deviance as a relative concept
* Emile Durkheim’s functionalist theory of deviance and its four roles of deviance:
* affirmation of society’s cultural norms and values
* clarification of a society’s moral boundaries
* the unification of others in society
* promoting social change
* Travis Hirschi’s social control theory of deviance and the relationship between weak bonds and deviance:
* attachment
* commitment
* involvement
* belief in social values
* Howard S. Becker’s labelling theory of deviance:
* the process of labelling
* responses to labelling
* the nature of positive deviance: altruism, charisma, innovation, supra conformity and innate characteristics
* Stanley Cohen’s theory of moral panics:
* the creation of folk devils
* the role of the media in assisting in the creation of moral panics
* the impact of moral panic on individuals and groups considered to be deviant.

Key skills

* explain and apply sociological concepts
* explain how deviance is a relative concept
* explain and apply the functionalist, social control and labelling theories of deviance
* outline examples of positive deviance
* analyse the impact of moral panic on individuals and groups considered to be deviant
* gather and use a variety of relevant source materials to support observation and analysis
* evaluate sources and critically reflect on their own and others’ approaches to understanding the social world
* synthesise evidence to draw conclusions.

Area of Study 2

Crime

In this area of study, students develop an understanding of the concept of crime. They learn that crime and its definition are shaped by a community’s sense of what is considered right and wrong. Some sociologists take a broader view of the definition of crime and include acts that harm other individuals or the environment. Generally, crime refers to an act that violates the written criminal laws of society enacted by local, state and federal governments. There are several categories considered by sociologists to be criminal in nature; these include crimes against the person, including hate crimes, crimes against property, victimless crime, white-collar crime, corporate crime and organised crime. Students use Australian data to examine and analyse crime rates and consider the various factors that may contribute to people committing crimes. It may be helpful to engage in sociological thinking during the consideration of these factors. They investigate the international nature of some types of crime and examine the various ways that other nations deal with crime in comparison to Australia.

Students examine the aim and rationale of punishment in Australian society, including retribution and just punishment, deterrence and denunciation, rehabilitation, incapacitation and societal protection and restoration. Each of these rationales for punishment aims to shape the behaviour of the offender and/or the behaviour of members of society, with a focus on how and why we punish. Students also explore the effectiveness of prison sentencing and restorative justice as ways of reducing recidivism.

Outcome 2

On completion of this unit the student should be able to discuss crime in Australia and evaluate the effectiveness of methods of punishment in the judicial system for shaping human behaviour.

To achieve this outcome the student will draw on key knowledge and key skills outlined in Area of Study 2.

Key knowledge

* the sociological concept of crime:
* the relationship between norms, law and crime
* the various types of crime, such as: crimes against the person, crimes against property, victimless crime, white-collar crime and corporate crime, hate crime and organised crime
* Australian data related to crime rates, including age, gender, country of birth, seriousness of offence and types of crimes committed
* the international nature of some types of crime, such as the illegal drug trade, people trafficking and terrorism
* the various ways that other nations deal with crime
* a range of factors that lead people to commit crimes, including the strain theory of crime
* the sociological concept of punishment, including the rationale and aims of punishment: retribution, deterrence, rehabilitation, societal protection and restoration
* the concept of recidivism, including the effectiveness of restorative justice and prison sentencing on reducing recidivism
* the effectiveness of alternative sentencing models on reducing recidivism, such as the Victorian Drug Court and the Koori Court.

Key skills

* explain and apply sociological concepts
* discuss the various types of crime
* analyse Australian data related to crime rates and identify differences according to age, gender, country of birth, seriousness of offence and types of crimes committed
* compare the various ways that other nations deal with crimes
* describe a range of factors that lead people to commit crimes
* evaluate the effectiveness of restorative justice and sentencing on the aims of punishment and on reducing recidivism
* gather and use a variety of relevant source materials to support observation and analysis
* evaluate sources and critically reflect on their own and others’ approaches to understanding the social world
* synthesise evidence to draw conclusions.

Assessment

The award of satisfactory completion for a unit is based on whether the student has demonstrated the set of outcomes specified for the unit. Teachers should use a variety of learning activities and assessment tasks that provide a range of opportunities for students to demonstrate the key knowledge and key skills in the outcomes.

The areas of study, including the key knowledge and key skills listed for the outcomes, should be used for course design and the development of learning activities and assessment tasks. Assessment must be a part of the regular teaching and learning program and should be completed mainly in class and within a limited timeframe.

All assessments at Units 1 and 2 are school-based. Procedures for assessment of levels of achievement in Units 1 and 2 are a matter for school decision.

For this unit students are required to demonstrate two outcomes. As a set these outcomes encompass the areas of study in the unit.

Suitable tasks for assessment in this unit may be selected from the following:

* a case study involving primary research
* an extended response
* a film analysis
* a media analysis
* a multimedia presentation
* a representation analysis
* a research report
* a selection of structured questions requiring short-answer responses.

Where teachers allow students to choose between tasks, they must ensure that the tasks they set are of comparable scope and demand.

Unit 3: Culture and ethnicity

In this unit, students explore expressions of culture and ethnicity within Australian society in two different contexts – Australian Indigenous cultures, and ethnicity in relation to migrant groups.

In Area of Study 1, students critically explore the historical suppression of, and increasing public awareness of, Australian Indigenous cultures. They examine the past and its influence on subsequent generations, as well as contemporary factors that may support and/or limit increasing awareness of Australian Indigenous cultures. Students consider indigenous and non-indigenous perspectives and responses in their exploration.

In Area of Study 2, students investigate ethnicity as a key sociological category that plays an important role in social life. Individuals often define themselves, or others, as members of at least one ethnic group based on a common heritage that gives them a unique social identity. Ethnicity is not fixed and unchanging; instead, ethnic identities constantly evolve and are shaped through a variety of political, cultural and social forces. The concept is often used in contrast to the concept of race, which generally refers to groups based on visible physical characteristics such as skin colour and facial features. Most sociologists prefer to focus on the concept of ethnicity rather than race.

Students develop an understanding of a variety of factors that need to be considered when investigating experiences of ethnicity. For example, the way that a group sees itself might not correspond with the way that outsiders see it. Sometimes observers place people into broad ethnic categories that do not correspond with the views of individual group members.

Area of Study 1

Australian Indigenous cultures

In this area of study, students explore the meaning of culture and the distinction between material and non-material culture.

Australian Indigenous cultures are diverse and are comprised of a range of symbols, languages, values and norms. The term ‘Australian Indigenous cultures’ is used in this study design to encompass this range. As students explore the meaning of culture, they consider examples from Victorian Koorie culture and wider Australian Indigenous cultures.

Students become familiar with Charles Wright Mills’ (1959) concept of the sociological imagination. Mills considered the sociological imagination to be an awareness of the relationship between personal experience and wider society. Mills emphasised the importance of seeing the connections between social structures or public issues and individual experience or personal troubles. To have a sociological imagination, a person must be able to pull away from the situation and think from an alternative point of view.

The use of a sociological imagination assists students to examine representations of Australian Indigenous cultures. Students analyse these representations through consideration of ethnocentrism and cultural relativism. They critically investigate historical and contemporary representations found in the media and other public forums that claim to be or could be interpreted as culturally relativist, and representations that claim to be or could be interpreted as ethnocentric. Generally, contemporary representations are those created within the last ten years. Students consider the implications of these representations for building awareness of Australian Indigenous cultures. In this area of study, the notion of awareness involves an examination of what information is known or understood about Australian Indigenous cultures; whereas public views about Australian Indigenous cultures relates to the opinions, biases and stereotypes that might exist or are being challenged about our First Nations Peoples.

In the past, the suppression of Australian Indigenous cultures was widespread. This occurred through the implementation of past policies and practices. Some of these policies and practices included the interrelated protection and segregation policies, the policy of assimilation, the integration policy and, more recently, the Northern Territory National Emergency Response (NTER), also known as The Intervention. Nevertheless, Australian Indigenous people have worked to protect and ensure the survival of their cultures. Students consider a range of significant examples that highlight this suppression and Australian Indigenous responses to it.

Students explain the process of reconciliation through examples of both symbolic reconciliation such as speeches, truth telling and campaigns, and practical reconciliation, such as government funding for the Closing the Gap policy.

Students consider a range of factors that have influenced and are influencing public awareness of Australian Indigenous cultures. As students explore these factors they consider both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people and/or groups who have been or are active in these areas. Students also study an issue supporting and/or limiting awareness of Australian Indigenous cultures, using publicly accessible material produced in the last ten years.

Outcome 1

On completion of this unit the student should be able to analyse the impacts of historical suppression and evaluate the increasing public awareness of Australian Indigenous cultures.

To achieve this outcome the student will draw on key knowledge and key skills outlined in Area of Study 1.

Key knowledge

* the meaning of culture and its major components: non-material culture and material culture
* the sociological imagination as conceived by Charles Wright Mills and its connection to the study of cultures
* a range of historical and contemporary representations of Australian Indigenous cultures that could be interpreted as ethnocentric and/or culturally relativistic representations
* public misconceptions about Australian Indigenous cultures concerning:
* past perception that Australia was land that belonged to no-one prior to European arrival
* the perception that Australian Indigenous people share one culture
* the perception that Australian Indigenous people mainly live in arid areas of Australia
* the historical suppression of Australian Indigenous cultures through government policies and Indigenous responses to this suppression
* the process of reconciliation through symbolic and practical reconciliation
* one issue related to changing awareness of Australian Indigenous cultures:
* the nature of the issue
* the historical and political context of this issue
* the relationship between this issue and awareness and public views of Australian Indigenous cultures
* significant indigenous and non-indigenous people (individuals and/or groups) involved and their response(s) to the issue

Key skills

* explain and apply sociological concepts
* explain the process of engaging the sociological imagination to study culture
* analyse representations
* explain public misconceptions about Australian Indigenous cultures
* analyse the impact of one example of historical suppression on Australian Indigenous cultures
* analyse the process of reconciliation
* evaluate how the issue supports and/or limits the public awareness and views of Australian Indigenous cultures
* gather and use a variety of relevant source materials to support observation and analysis
* evaluate sources and critically reflect on their own and others’ approaches to understanding the social world
* synthesise evidence to draw conclusions.

Area of Study 2

Ethnicity

In this area of study, students examine the sociological concepts of race and ethnicity. The notion of ethnicity refers to a shared cultural heritage and way of life. This is different from the related concept of religion. For example, people can share the same religion but be of different ethnic groups. Students explore the process of othering in the context of ethnicity. Othering is a phenomenon in which some individuals or groups are defined and labelled as not fitting in within the norms of a social group. It may therefore play a role in the formation of prejudices against people and groups.

Students explore the ways that cultural identity is formed and experienced by Australian ethnic migrant groups, as shaped by various material and non-material aspects of culture such as faith, tradition and customs. These ethnic groups may include descendants of early immigrants, for example from Britain or China, or include more recent wider immigration. Students learn about hybridity, a key sociological theory informed by Stuart Hall related to the study of ethnicity. The theory of ethnic hybridity attempts to encapsulate the sense of ethnic diversity seen in dual or multiple cultural identities.

Students investigate Australia’s ethnic diversity and the factors influencing members of ethnic groups and their sense of belonging and inclusion in multicultural Australia. They consider a range of factors that may shape both belonging and inclusion such as responses to certain customs and traditions, media representations and political factors such as government policy or funding.Students consider the ethical implications of conducting research on human subjects in the context of research into ethnic groups. Students’ analyses of specific ethnic groups may be drawn from secondary sources and/or from primary research undertaken by the student. This research is informed by the ethical guidelines of the Australian Sociological Association. Students are expected to engage in ethical practice that respects the welfare and privacy of research participants. The Safety and wellbeing section on [page 7](#Safety) of this study design contains advice on the conduct of primary research.

Outcome 2

On completion of this unit the student should be able to analyse experiences of ethnicity within Australian society.

To achieve this outcome the student will draw on key knowledge and key skills outlined in Area of Study 2.

Key knowledge

* the nature and meaning of the sociological concepts of race and ethnicity
* the process of othering
* the nature of the theory of ethnic hybridity, as informed by Stuart Hall, and its connection to experiences of ethnicity
* Australia’s current ethnic diversity compared with other countries
* the historical context and contemporary concept of multiculturalism
* factors that may prevent or enable a sense of belonging and inclusion in Australia’s multicultural society:
* responses to cultural practices
* media representations
* political factors
* the purpose of an ethical methodology with reference to voluntary participation, informed consent, privacy and the confidentiality of data
* the experience of a specific ethnic group in Australia’s multicultural society:
* how the ethnic group identifies itself
* an overview of the non-material and material culture distinctive to the group
* the impact of practising certain customs and traditions, the media and political factors on the ethnic group’s sense of belonging and inclusion
* how an ethical methodology was or could be applied in the study of this ethnic group.

Key skills

* explain and apply sociological concepts
* explain the theory of ethnic hybridity
* outline Australia’s ethnic diversity through the use of a comparative perspectives methodology
* analyse factors that may prevent or enable a sense of belonging and inclusion in a multicultural Australian society
* analyse the experience of a specific ethnic group with reference to relevant sociological concepts and theories
* explain the purpose of an ethical methodology
* apply an ethical methodology to source relevant evidence
* gather and use a variety of relevant source materials to support observation and analysis
* evaluate sources and critically reflect on their own and others’ approaches to understanding the social world
* synthesise evidence to draw conclusions.

School-based assessment

Satisfactory completion

The award of satisfactory completion for a unit is based on whether the student has demonstrated the set of outcomes specified for the unit. Teachers should use a variety of learning activities and assessment tasks to provide a range of opportunities for students to demonstrate the key knowledge and key skills in the outcomes.

The areas of study and key knowledge and key skills listed for the outcomes should be used for course design and the development of learning activities and assessment tasks.

Assessment of levels of achievement

School-assessment Coursework

The student’s level of achievement in Unit 3 will be determined by School-assessed Coursework. School-assessed Coursework tasks must be a part of the regular teaching and learning program and must not unduly add to the workload associated with that program. They must be completed mainly in class and within a limited timeframe.

Where teachers provide a range of options for the same School-assessed Coursework task, they should ensure that the options are of comparable scope and demand.

The types and range of forms of School-assessed Coursework for the outcomes are prescribed within the study design. The VCAA publishes [Support materials](https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/curriculum/vce/vce-study-designs/sociology/Pages/Index.aspx) for this study, which include advice on the design of assessment tasks and the assessment of student work for a level of achievement.

Teachers will provide to the VCAA a numerical score representing an assessment of the student’s level of achievement. The score must be based on the teacher’s assessment of the performance of each student on the tasks set out in the following table.

Contribution to final assessment

School-assessed Coursework for Unit 3 will contribute 25 per cent to the study score.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Outcomes** | **Marks allocated** | **Assessment tasks** |
| **Outcome 1**  Analyse the impacts of historical suppression and evaluate the increasing public awareness of Australian Indigenous cultures. | **50** | The student’s performance will be assessed using two or more of the following:   * a case study involving primary research * an extended response * a film analysis * a media analysis * a multimedia presentation * a representation analysis * a research report * a selection of structured questions requiring short-answer responses. |
| **Outcome 2**  Analyse experiences of ethnicity within Australian society. | **50** |
| **Total marks** | **100** |  |

External assessment

The level of achievement for Units 3 and 4 is also assessed by an end-of-year examination (see [page 28](#Examination)), which will contribute 50 per cent to the study score.

Unit 4: Community, social movements and social change

In this unit, students explore the ways sociologists have thought about the idea of community and how the various types of community are experienced. They examine the relationship between social movements and social change.

In Area of Study 1, students examine the changing definitions and experiences of community. This includes examination of the challenges and opportunities posed by political, social, economic and technological change. Students examine the concept of community with particular reference to the theories of Ferdinand Tonnies and Michel Maffesoli.

In Area of Study 2, students investigate the role of social movements. A social movement involves a group engaged in an organised effort to achieve social change. Students develop an understanding of the purpose, evolution, power and outcomes of social movements.

Area of Study 1

Community

Sociologists refer to the concept of community as a group of people who share social relationships through being geographically close to each other and/or being in regular contact with each other, and through having similarities such as mutual interests and/or shared ideology. In this area of study, students explore community in general as well as through a detailed case study of a specific community. The specific community may be located within Australia and/or overseas. However, the chosen specific community cannot be any Australian Indigenous community from which examples might have been selected for study in Unit 3, Area of Study 1, or the specific ethnic group explored in Unit 3, Area of Study 2.

Students investigate changes to the concept of community over time by exploring the theories of Ferdinand Tonnies and Michel Maffesoli. The study of the experience of community includes an exploration of economic, social and political factors, as well as relevant geographical characteristics. Geographical characteristics affecting the experience of community could be related to proximity and accessibility, climate, scenic quality, landforms and natural resources, or built features such as community centres or other relevant characteristics. Students evaluate a specific community experience with an emphasis on the varying levels of belonging to the group. Groups with high levels of belonging are said to have a strong sense of community. A sense of community occurs when members actively participate and have an emotional connection with the group.

Data may be drawn from secondary sources and/or from primary research undertaken by the student. This research is informed by the guidelines of the Australian Sociological Association. The Safety and wellbeing section of this study design on [page 7](#Safety) contains advice for the conduct of primary research.

Outcome 1

On completion of this unit the student should be able to analyse the experience of community generally and analyse and evaluate a specific community.

To achieve this outcome the student will draw on key knowledge and key skills outlined in Area of Study 1.

Key knowledge

* changes to the concept of community over time:
* the theory of Ferdinand Tonnies
* Michel Maffesoli’s theory of neo-tribes
* the experience of community generally:
* factors that influence feelings of belonging
* the impact of information and communications technology
* the effects of economic, social and political factors, and of geographical characteristics
* the nature of a selected community and reasons this group can be classified as a community
* influences on the experience of the selected community and the interplay between these influences:
* factors that may have influenced feelings of belonging
* information and communications technology
* economic, social and political factors, and geographical characteristics
* different perspectives on the sense of community from different members within the community
* the nature of ethical methodology with reference to voluntary participation, informed consent, privacy and the confidentiality of data.

Key skills

* explain and apply sociological concepts
* analyse changes to the concept of community over time with reference to the theories of Ferdinand Tonnies and Michel Maffesoli
* compare Ferdinand Tonnies’ and Michel Maffesoli’s approaches to understanding community
* identify and explain the factors that influence feelings of belonging
* analyse the influence of information and communications technology on the experience of community
* analyse and evaluate the influence of economic, social and political factors, and of geographical characteristics on the experience of community
* explain why feelings of belonging can vary within a community
* apply an ethical methodology to source and use a range of evidence to support observations and analysis
* gather and use a variety of relevant source materials to support observations and analysis
* evaluate sources and critically reflect on their own and others’ approaches to understanding the social world
* synthesise evidence to draw conclusions.

Area of Study 2

Social movements and social change

In this area of study, students investigate the sociological concept of power. There are many forms of power used by social movements and their opposition(s). These include reward, coercive, referent, legitimate, expert and informational power. Students undertake a general exploration of the meaning, nature and purpose of social movements and their ability to achieve social change. When assessing the success of social movements, students draw upon the work of Erica Chenoweth. Chenoweth’s research has shown that non-violent forms of civil disobedience are more effective in achieving desired social change. When exploring the nature and purpose of social movements, students draw on brief illustrative examples.

Students must also investigate one specific social movement in detail. The social movement selected for study may be operating at a local, national or international scale. Although the social movement may have a history, it should be examined in its current context and be at a stage where its impact on social change has been commented on in a range of sources. Students should investigate the way this social movement uses power in their attempt to achieve social change, for example through campaigns and the use of social media platforms, as well as identify the means used by the opponents of the social movement to prevent this change from occurring.

Outcome 2

On completion of this unit the student should be able to analyse the nature and purpose of social movements and evaluate their influence on social change.

To achieve this outcome the student will draw on key knowledge and key skills outlined in Area of Study 2.

Key knowledge

* the concepts of social movement and social change
* the nature and purpose of social movements:
* alternative, redemptive, reformative and revolutionary types of social movements
* the stages in social movements of emergence, coalescence, bureaucratisation and decline
* how power is used by a social movement and its opposition
* influences of social movements on social change, with reference to the work of Erica Chenoweth
* the nature and purpose of one specific social movement and an understanding of the following interrelated components:
* the social movement as alternative, redemptive, reformative or revolutionary
* how power is exercised by the social movement
* the current stage of the social movement
* how power is used by the social movement’s opposition in an attempt to prevent it from achieving its desired social changes
* the influences of the social movement on social change, with reference to the work of Erica Chenoweth.

Key skills

* explain and apply sociological concepts
* analyse the nature and purpose of social movements
* analyse how power is used by social movements and by their opposition
* evaluate the influence of social movements on social change
* gather and use a variety of relevant source materials to support observations and analysis
* evaluate sources and critically reflect on their own and others’ approaches to understanding the social world
* synthesise evidence to draw conclusions.

School-based assessment

Satisfactory completion

The award of satisfactory completion for a unit is based on whether the student has demonstrated the set of outcomes specified for the unit. Teachers should use a variety of learning activities and assessment tasks to provide a range of opportunities for students to demonstrate the key knowledge and key skills in the outcomes.

The areas of study and key knowledge and key skills listed for the outcomes should be used for course design and the development of learning activities and assessment tasks.

Assessment of levels of achievement

School-assessed Coursework

The student’s level of achievement in Unit 4 will be determined by School-assessed Coursework. School-assessed Coursework tasks must be a part of the regular teaching and learning program and must not unduly add to the workload associated with that program. They must be completed mainly in class and within a limited timeframe.

Where teachers provide a range of options for the same School-assessed Coursework task, they should ensure that the options are of comparable scope and demand.

The types and range of forms of School-assessed Coursework for the outcomes are prescribed within the study design. The VCAA publishes [Support materials](https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/curriculum/vce/vce-study-designs/sociology/Pages/Index.aspx) for this study, which include advice on the design of assessment tasks and the assessment of student work for a level of achievement.

Teachers will provide to the VCAA a numerical score representing an assessment of the student’s level of achievement. The score must be based on the teacher’s assessment of the performance of each student on the tasks set out in the following table.

Contribution to final assessment

School-assessed Coursework for Unit 4 will contribute 25 per cent to the study score.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Outcomes** | **Marks allocated** | **Assessment tasks** |
| **Outcome 1**  Analyse the experience of community generally and analyse and evaluate a specific community. | **50** | The student’s performance will be assessed using two or more of the following:   * a case study involving primary research * an extended response * a film analysis * a media analysis * a multimedia presentation * a representation analysis * a research report * a selection of structured questions requiring short-answer responses. |
| **Outcome 2**  Analyse the nature and purpose of social movements and evaluate their influence on social change. | **50** |
| **Total marks** | **100** |  |

External assessment

The level of achievement for Units 3 and 4 is also assessed by an end-of-year examination.

End-of-year examination

Contribution to final assessment

The examination will contribute 50 per cent to the study score.

Description

The examination will be set by a panel appointed by the VCAA. All the key knowledge and key skills that underpin the outcomes in Units 3 and 4 are examinable.

Conditions

The examination will be completed under the following conditions:

* Duration: 2 hours.
* Date: end-of-year, on a date to be published annually by the VCAA.
* VCAA examination rules will apply. Details of these rules are published annually in the   
  [*VCE Administrative Handbook*](https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/administration/vce-vcal-handbook/Pages/index.aspx).
* The examination will be marked by assessors appointed by the VCAA.

Further advice

The VCAA publishes specifications for all VCE examinations on the VCAA website. Examination specifications include details about the sections of the examination, their weighting, the question format(s) and any other essential information. The specifications are published in the first year of implementation of the revised Unit 3 and 4 sequence together with any sample material.