

2017 VCE Sociology examination report

General comments

Student responses to the 2017 Sociology examination included reference to a range of social groups and case studies. Many students chose to write about religious, sporting and interest-based communities. The progress of the Australian Marriage Equality social movement was a commonly referenced source.

Students are encouraged to be thorough when they engage in social research. Higher-scoring extended responses and essay responses drew upon a range of sources to support the assertions made. Many responses demonstrated a good understanding of the key knowledge of each area of study; however, it is also important for students to be able to respond to key skills. A lack of understanding of command terms, such as 'discuss' and 'analyse', reduced the quality of some responses.

Specific information

Note: Student responses reproduced in this report have not been corrected for grammar, spelling or factual information.

This report provides sample answers or an indication of what answers may have included. Unless otherwise stated, these are not intended to be exemplary or complete responses.

The statistics in this report may be subject to rounding resulting in a total more or less than 100 per cent.

Section A

Question 1

Marks	0	1	2	3	Average
%	2	7	24	68	2.6

This question required students to define the concept of culture. It was also necessary to provide two examples of Australian Indigenous culture. Students were required to:

- demonstrate an understanding of what is meant by the concept of culture
- provide two examples of Australian Indigenous culture from the representations or other material studied throughout the year.

Appropriate examples of culture from the representations included possum-skin cloaks, face paint, tomahawk, the treaty and the spiritual connection to land, country or place.

A range of external examples was presented. Many students made reference to Dreaming stories and cave paintings of the Victorian Koori creator deity, Bunjil the eagle.

Question 2a.

Marks	0	1	Average
%	9	91	0.9

This question required students to explain what is meant by the term 'ethnocentric'. Some students erroneously described the process of cultural relativism, due to poorly constructed definitions.

The following are excerpts from higher-scoring responses.

Sample 1

Ethnocentrism is a term coined by W.G. Sumner in 1906 ... refers to the belief that one's own culture is superior to others.

Sample 2

Ethnocentrism refers to the tendency to judge a culture by the standards of one's own culture, thus promoting bias, stereotypes and misunderstanding.

Question 2b.

Marks	0	1	2	Average
%	16	33	51	1.4

This question was well answered by many students. It required students to explain how an example from Representation 2 was ethnocentric.

It was necessary for students to provide:

- accurate examples of ethnocentrism
- a brief explanation as to how the examples were ethnocentric.

The following is an excerpt from a high-scoring response.

... the Indigenous Australians on the right, who gaze admiringly at the tomahawk given by John Batman, ethnocentrically suggest that Indigenous Australians had no complex weapon technology as the British colonists did ... The painting does not take into account the Indigenous Australians' use of the boomerang.

Question 3

Marks	0	1	2	Average
%	13	52	34	1.2

This question required students to examine how two examples from the representations potentially had an impact on the awareness and/or perception of Australian Indigenous culture.

Lower-scoring responses tended to discuss awareness and perception as one notion, rather than as two interrelated concepts.

To receive full marks for this question, students needed to:

- identify and explain the key features of two specific examples
- demonstrate an understanding of the terms 'awareness' and/or 'perception'
- provide an explanation of how each example built or limited awareness, or created a positive or negative perception of Australian Indigenous culture.

The following are excerpts from high-scoring responses.

Sample 1

Representation 3 highlights to readers the actual injustices that occurred in the past for Australian Indigenous culture ... "Aboriginals had no claim to land". This broadens people's knowledge.

Sample 2

Representation 1 increases perception by showing the diversity amongst Indigenous Australians, thus, challenging the stereotype that all Indigenous Australians 'live in the bush' ... the representation presents the elders in traditional clothing and with a didgeridoo, while others are dressed in suits and dresses.

Question 4

Marks	0	1	2	Average
%	17	37	46	1.3

This question required students to provide two examples to illustrate the responses of Australian Indigenous people to cultural suppression. Students were able to use Representation 3 and/or external examples to support their response.

Many students misunderstood the question requirements and provided examples of how Australian Indigenous culture was suppressed.

Appropriate examples included:

- Wurundjeri elders previously exchanging 'blankets, tomahawks and flour' for land
- engaging in 'treaty talks'
- feeling 'left out' of treaty negotiations
- resistance and protests
- walk-offs
- petitions
- assimilating into the dominant culture.

The following is an excerpt from a high-scoring response.

As a result of being forced onto missions and reserves under the Protection and Segregation policies, William Cooper and Jack Patten led the Cummergunja Walk off ... As a result of the Assimilation policy that forcibly removed mixed descent children from their families to live with white families, many of the mothers responded by painting their children in charcoal as well as trying to search for their children.

Question 5

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	Average
%	13	9	17	26	24	10	2.7

This question required students to examine Representation 3. To successfully address this question, they needed to discuss a policy that could be considered to be a war on Australian Indigenous culture.

Students were required to:

- identify and provide an overview of a suppression policy. These policies included Protection and Segregation, Assimilation and Integration
- discuss how the policy was a 'war on culture'.

The following are excerpts from high-scoring responses.

Sample 1

One policy is Assimilation which was implemented in 1951 to 'exterminate' a 'dying race' as the government wanted Indigenous people to adapt to white Australian culture ... This is a clear example of war being declared on Indigenous people as the society aimed to get rid of people, culture and traditions.

Sample 2

It could be considered a war on Australian Indigenous culture as it heavily suppressed their culture. Under the policy, a loss of traditional language occurred as Indigenous Australians were not allowed to speak their traditional language. As a result, the Creative Spirits website claims that out of the 250 languages, only 60 are considered 'healthy' today.

Question 6

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	Average
%	35	14	17	18	11	6	1.8

This question required students to explore how an international factor had supported public awareness and perception of Australian Indigenous culture. Suitable examples included but were not limited to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, and international advertising campaigns that promoted Australian Indigenous culture.

This question was not answered well by many students. A common error involved providing examples of 'national' rather than international factors.

In order to answer this question fully, students were required to:

- provide an overview of an international factor
- discuss how the factor supports the public awareness and perception of Australian Indigenous culture.

The following is an example of a high-scoring response.

One international factor that has supported public awareness and perception is the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples ... The Declaration was created in 2007 and was formally supported by Australia in 2009. It consists of a series of rights that Indigenous people should have. This includes articles 14 – 17 stating that they should have 'economic labour rights'. The Declaration supports public awareness as it gives Indigenous Australians International recognition ... Les Malezer from the Gubbi Gubbi/Butchulla clan in Queensland states that the Declaration is a 'tool for peace and justice', also showing how it gives a positive perception of Australian Indigenous culture.

Section B

Question 7a.

Marks	0	1	2	Average
%	10	61	28	1.2

This question required students to explain what is meant by the term 'ethnic hybridity'. In addition, students needed to provide an example of ethnic hybridity from one of the representations.

In order to receive full marks for this question, it was necessary to make reference to the theorist Stuart Hall.

A suitable explanation of ethnic hybridity is the development of new cultural forms from a mixture of two or more cultural influences.

The following are excerpts from high-scoring responses.

Sample 1

The Karen-Australian men and women show their ethnic hybridity in Representation 4 because while they are dressed in their traditional clothes, an Australian flag and tea-cup are present on the table.

Sample 2

An example is in Representation 6 where Karen students have adopted new sports such as 'football' and 'netball'.

Question 7b.

Marks	0	1	2	3	Average
%	14	25	41	20	1.7

This question required students to make connections between the process of ethnic hybridity and the broader experience of ethnicity.

In order to answer this question fully, students were required to:

- provide an example of ethnic hybridity from one of the representations
- outline the process of blending elements of two or more cultures
- make connections to the positive and/or negative experience of ethnicity.

The following are excerpts from high-scoring responses.

Sample 1

Ethnic hybridity allows people to express their ethnicity ... by picking and choosing the elements that form their individual ethnicity.

Sample 2

Ethnic hybridity positively impacts the experience of ethnicity by increasing the awareness of different cultures ... resulting in a more positive perception, preventing an 'us' and 'them' mentality from forming. For example, as a result of ethnic hybridity, according to Representation 6, the 'Nhill community celebrates Karen festivities and culture', thereby encouraging cultural relativism.

Question 7c.

Marks	0	1	2	3	Average
%	7	16	26	51	2.2

This question required students to demonstrate an understanding of the concept of the 'other'. In doing so, students needed to make links to the experiences of the Karen people in the rural town of Nhill.

To achieve a high score, students needed to do the following:

- demonstrate an understanding of the concept of the 'other'
- make specific links to the experience of the Karen people of Nhill
- acknowledge that within the context of the representation material, the Karen people had not been 'othered'.

The following are excerpts from high-scoring responses.

Sample 1

Othering refers to the exclusion of people who are seen as outsiders by the dominant group.

Sample 2

In Nhill the Karen people do not experience a significant amount of 'othering', on the contrary, their 'contribution to community' is 'celebrate'. Rather than being stigmatised or excluded by the Nhill community ... 'settle ... comfortably into the local community'.

Question 8

Marks	0	1	2	Average
%	3	8	89	1.9

This question required students to provide two examples of the social, political or economic benefits for the Nhill community following the resettlement of the Karen refugees. Students were able to provide examples of any combination of factors.

Appropriate social gains included language diversity, increased cultural celebrations, population growth and involvement in extracurricular activities.

Appropriate political gains included enhanced infrastructure, such as schools, business and location services.

Appropriate economic gains included population growth that keeps local businesses functioning, the introduction of new businesses and workforce, and revitalised local services attracting increased government funding.

Question 9

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Average
%	14	5	8	15	17	17	8	7	5	3	1	4

This question required students to explain, within the context of their ethnicity studies, what is meant by 'ethical methodology'. Students were required to refer to two specific ethical guidelines in their response.

Lower-scoring responses referred to ethical principles but did not describe the purpose of ethics or explain how the guidelines are applied.

Student responses needed to:

- demonstrate an understanding of what 'ethical methodology' means, and explain why it is important
- make links to two of the following ethical guidelines:
 - voluntary participation
 - informed consent procedures
 - confidentiality and/or anonymity of participants
- explain how the guidelines were and/or should be applied to an ethnic group.

The following is an excerpt from a high-scoring response.

Ethical methodology is the practices that need to be followed when conducting research. For Sociology, the (TASA) – The Australian Sociological Association guidelines are referred to when

investigating. Following ethical methodology ensures that the safety and rights of participants are upheld ...

When conducting research into a local Burundian group ... informed consent was received prior to the research. All members were required to read and understand a consent form ... Participation was a voluntary decision and was not forced onto any Burundian members.

Section C

Question 10

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Average
%	8	10	15	13	16	16	7	7	4	2	1	3.8

This question required students to connect the social movement life cycle stage of bureaucratisation to the use of power. In doing so, students needed to show how a specific movement's access to power had impacted upon its ability to achieve social change.

Lower-scoring responses did not make reference to Max Weber's theory of power, and some also did not make links between the specific stage of the movement and the associated ability to use power to create or resist social change.

Student responses needed to:

- demonstrate an understanding of social movement, social change and power, as conceived by Max Weber and bureaucratisation
- provide an overview of a social movement, including its goals for social change
- explain how the bureaucratisation stage enables greater access to and use of power
- provide examples of power used by the social movement and its subsequent impact on social change
- use detailed evidence studied throughout the year to support their response
- make an overall assessment about the influence of power on change.

The following is an excerpt from a high-scoring response.

Keep Sydney Open is a social movement formed in opposition to the Sydney lock out laws implemented by the New South Wales government in order to reduce alcohol – fueled violence ... Bureaucratisation is the third stage of a social movement and involves strategy being carried out, establishing the movement as a political force. ... Power itself refers to the ability to achieve desired ends despite resistance from others. ... The impact of bureaucratisation is shown by Keep Sydney Open through recognition by the government, as the lockout laws were reduced by half an hour in December 2016. This came as a result of the efforts of Keep Sydney Open who have been credited with 'helping the government better balance nightlife' according to the Huffington Post.

Question 11

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Average
%	19	12	10	10	12	11	11	8	5	2	1	3.6

This question required students to describe two social movement emergence theories. In addition, students needed to connect one of the theories to the emergence of a specific movement.

Lower-scoring responses wrote as if emergence theory were a cause rather than an explanation for the emergence of social movements. In addition, many students described two movements poorly, rather than applying the theory to one specific group.

Student responses needed to:

- demonstrate an understanding of social movement, relative deprivation theory and new social movements theory
- provide a detailed description of each emergence theory
- describe a specific social movement, with a focus on why the group formed
- explain how one of the theories accounts for the emergence of a specific movement
- use detailed evidence to support their discussion.

The following is an excerpt from a high-scoring response:

... the (relative) deprivation theory argues that movements emerge due to a large number of people feeling deprived of what they consider to be essential for their well-being and happiness (such as goods, services and comforts) when comparisons are made.

The (relative) deprivation theory can be used to describe the emergence of Australian Marriage Equality (AME) ... AME's underlying goal is to achieve marriage equality in Australia as they believe that 'a person's gender or sexuality should not affect their legal rights and responsibilities under Australian marriage law'. AME emerged in 2004 in response to the amendments in the Australian Marriage Act (1961) declaring marriage as 'only between a man and a woman'. Thus AME emerged due to a sense of deprivation felt (by mostly same-sex couples) ... AME also emerged as same sex couples in Australia where making comparisons with other countries that had already legalized same-sex marriages such as the Netherlands (2001) and Belgium (2003).

Section D

Question chosen	none	12	13
%	3	58	39

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	Average
%	4	3	6	7	4	6	10	5	9	7	7	7	7	3	5	4	2	2	2	0	0	8.1

This section of the examination was not answered well by many students. The main area of concern related to the choice of community group selected for study. Some responses included groups that were fictional textbook examples or based on a single documentary, rather than well researched case studies. Some responses made generalisations about very large groups and these types of responses often lacked adequate supporting evidence. In addition, some groups – such as McDonald's, Airbnb and Facebook – were often too broad and based on descriptions of business practices, rather than social connections. While it is possible for a community to exist within these categories, the boundaries of these groups needed to be outlined – for example, the Berwick McDonald's social club, the North Western Airbnb hub and the Melbourne Vegan Facebook group.

In addition, where possible it is preferable that students not make reference in their response to the specific school they attend.

Question 12

This question required students to analyse how a community had been influenced by one or more economic, social, political or environmental changes.

In order to answer this question fully, students needed to:

- demonstrate an understanding of the concept of community
- provide a description of a specific community

- analyse how one or more economic, social, political or environmental changes impacted on the experience of the community
- use detailed evidence studied throughout the year to support the response.

Question 13

This question required students to analyse the impact that information and communications technology had on community experience. In doing so, students were required to focus on a specific community group, and make reference to the theory of Manuel Castells.

In order to answer this question fully, it was necessary to:

- demonstrate an understanding of community, community experience, information and communications technology and Manuel Castells' theory of network society
- describe a specific community
- engage in an analysis, which involved making an assessment about whether information and communications technology had a positive and/or negative impact on community experience
- use detailed evidence studied throughout the year to support the response.