**VCE Sociology (2018–2023)**

School-based assessment report

GENERAL COMMENTS

This report provides advice for the first year of implementation of the [VCE Sociology Study Design 2018–2023](https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/Documents/vce/sociology/SociologySD_2018.pdf). The [VCE Sociology Advice for teachers](https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/Pages/vce/adviceforteachers/sociology/introduction.aspx) provides teaching and learning advice for Units 1 to 4 and assessment advice for school-based assessment in Units 3 and 4. Other support materials for the study can be found on the [VCE Sociology](https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/Pages/vce/studies/sociology/sociologyindex.aspx) study page on the VCAA website.

Overall the material submitted for Units 3 and 4 School-based Assessment Audit demonstrated that schools were familiar with the outcome requirements of the VCE Sociology Study Design, with only a small number of schools using terminology that was referred to in the previous study design.

The scope of the outcomes is very broad, therefore it would be quite difficult to assess all of the key knowledge and key skills in one task. Most schools demonstrated the use of multiple School-assessed Coursework (SAC) tasks to assess the outcomes and this is strongly encouraged.

It is not necessary to cover all the key knowledge and key skills; however, each element of an outcome must be assessed across the task/s given for the area of study. In choosing the most appropriate task/s from the suggested list, schools need to keep in mind that the nature of the tasks should focus on analysis within the scope of the key knowledge.

Comprehensive short-answer questions comprising a representation analysis, followed by a second task involving an extended response, was the most popular choice for assessing outcomes for Unit 3. This option allows students to cover all elements of the outcome and effectively covers the breadth of the outcome. Some schools developed a multimedia presentation and research report as their key SAC task. Regardless of task type authentication issues must be considered.

Where a PowerPoint presentation of a community is set as the main SAC task, it is important that schools ensure that:

* the task adequately and appropriately covers the key knowledge and key skills
* the task should also be able to elicit responses to obtain a spread of results for a group of students
* the conditions of the task are appropriate to ensure authentication issues are addressed (completed mainly in class, ensuring that students are assessed on work that is genuinely their own).

Schools are strongly encouraged to refer to the *Advice for teachers* which provides examples of performance descriptors and sample approaches to developing an assessment task.

Schools are reminded that if they are using more than one task to assess the outcome, the performance descriptors (whether VCAA or school-developed) should be modified to reflect the key knowledge and key skills students will be assessed against. This will also provide a sound base for providing feedback to students on their performance.

It is sound practice to provide students with a detailed guide to assessment before the date set for the task, as this allows students to adequately prepare for each SAC task. In terms of providing detailed feedback to students so that they can demonstrate improvement in future tasks, it is beneficial to distinguish between the performance descriptors on the marking criteria.

In general, SACs that incorporated a cover sheet or separate instruction materials, such as PowerPoint slides and/or Word documents, provided greater guidance for students regarding appropriate preparation for the specific SAC.

A large number of schools opted for tasks that included structured questions, incorporating an analysis of either text-based or visual representations (for Unit 3), and in many cases, an extended response for both Units 3 and 4. These types of tasks allowed for greater accuracy in the creation of tasks and application of SAC conditions, which were in line with the requirements of the study design and the *VCE assessment principles*. More specifically, they allowed schools to demonstrate that their SAC tasks were completed under fair conditions, were accessible to all students and ensured that appropriate authentication measures were in place.

While every school provided students with a mark allocation for each question, sometimes the allocations were inconsistent. For example, four marks were allocated to a “define” question, but only two marks to an “evaluate” question. In order for students to be given an opportunity to demonstrate their highest level of performance on the outcome, it is imperative that all tasks include a range of instructional words that is accurately reflected in the marking allocation. Schools should ensure that there is a balance of short and extended tasks, as this gives students the opportunity to demonstrate capabilities in higher order thinking questions. To avoid any issues with authentication and/or undue stress and over-assessment of students, it is advised that the time allocated for each SAC accurately reflects the requirements and mark allocation.

It is important that all tasks include a range of questions with regards to difficulty and scope, so that students can demonstrate their highest level of performance on the outcome. These should include questions that provide students with the opportunity to demonstrate the key skills required for this outcome including ‘explain’, ‘analyse’, ‘evaluate’ and ‘assess’. The marks allocated for each of these questions should be weighted to appropriately reflect the depth, complexity and detail required for each question.

Most schools audited developed their own SAC tasks, or if they used commercially produced tasks or tasks from a previous year, appropriate modifications were made ensuring that the task met the requirements of the current study design and that student work could be authenticated. Students were generally provided with an assessment timeline of SACs for each outcome, which included ensuring a variety of task types and conditions were used to assess each outcome, and that appropriate feedback would be received within a few weeks of SAC completion.

Where schools were required to demonstrate that they provide the opportunity for all students to demonstrate their highest level of performance on the outcome, only some schools identified tasks that catered for the full range of student ability. There must be questions covering a range of difficulty, such as open-ended questions that require careful analysis and/or evaluation, rather than just the ability to provide accurate definitions.

The majority of schools audited indicated that appropriate cross-marking procedures were in place where there was more than one class and/or more than one teacher for the study. In situations where there is only one class at the school, teachers are encouraged to cross-mark work with other experienced colleagues at their school, or, as indicated through the audit, form relationships with colleagues from another school.

Overall, the School-based Assessment Audit was completed accurately, demonstrating a good understanding of the requirements of the study design. Schools completing future audits are encouraged to provide detailed information regarding their assessment timelines, SAC tasks, authentication measures, cross-marking and moderation procedures.

SPECIFIC INFORMATION

Unit 3: Culture and ethnicity

Outcome 1

*Analyse and evaluate changes in public awareness and views of Australian Indigenous culture.*

**Task type options**

One or more of the following:

* an analysis of text-based or visual representation/s
* a multimedia presentation
* a report
* structured questions
* an extended response
* a film analysis.

As the scope of this outcome is very broad, most schools demonstrated the use of multiple SAC tasks to assess Outcome 1 which is strongly encouraged.

Most schools chose to set short-answer questions under test conditions. The length and type of questions varied, with most including a representation analysis and an extended response question. The questions relating to the components of culture, the sociological imagination, ethnocentrism, cultural relativism and public misconceptions, were generally well presented, with appropriate use of instructional words and marking allocation.

SAC tasks must reflect the current study design. Some questions relating to historical suppression still required students to refer to the Integration Policy, which was a requirement of the previous study design. Similarly, some schools still had a large focus on the Northern Territory Emergency Response (NTER) which was a requirement of the previous study design. Some questions relating to ‘shaping public views’ still referred to ‘perception’ instead of ‘views’.

For questions relating to ‘one issue related to changing awareness of Australian Indigenous Culture’, some schools did not demonstrate the assessment of this key knowledge dot point in any of their tasks. The two issues presented by some schools included ‘constitutional recognition’ and the ‘change the date’ debate.

Some SAC tasks were restricted in the number and scope of questions. Appropriate consideration needs to be given to the detail required for each question and the subsequent marking allocation. Some schools included an extended response as part of the overall SAC for Outcome 1, while others included an extended response as a separate SAC, thereby assessing Outcome 1 using more than one task.

Comprehensive short-answer questions comprising a representation analysis, followed by a second task involving an extended response, was the most popular choice for assessing this outcome.

Outcome 2

*Identify and analyse experiences of ethnicity within Australian society.*

**Task type options**

One or more of the following:

* an analysis of text-based or visual representation/s
* a multimedia presentation
* a report
* structured questions
* an extended response
* a film analysis.

This outcome assesses students’ ability to identify and analyse experiences of ethnicity in relation to a specific ethnic group that they have chosen for investigation.

Many schools indicated that this outcome was assessed using a multimedia presentation or report, in addition to a set of structured questions that involve a representation analysis and an extended response. One school indicated that they used a PowerPoint presentation. Schools are encouraged to use a range of tasks when assessing this outcome. Most schools chose to set short-answer questions under test conditions. The length and type of questions varied, with most including a representation analysis and an extended response question (either at the end, or as an additional task).

The questions relating to the concepts of race, ethnicity, ethnocentrism, cultural relativism, the other, ethnic hybridity and ethnic diversity, were generally suitably addressed, with appropriate use of instructional words. Schools are reminded to consider the complexity and detail required for each question when they allocate marks. Mark allocations which do not necessarily fit with the skill level required for the question makes it quite difficult for students to ascertain the difference between the rigour and complexity required for different questions.

For questions included in SAC tasks that related to the concept of multiculturalism and barriers and enablers, some schools designed questions that required students to evaluate the factors that impact barriers and enablers within the context of the multicultural policy. Schools should be able to distinguish between the multiculturalism policy and the concept of a multicultural society, as students may misunderstand questions included in the SAC. It is also important that schools avoid over-assessing students and do not assess concepts that are not relevant to the study design.

Students are required to demonstrate that they have ‘applied ethical methodology to source relevant evidence’ given that they are required to *“consider the ethical implications of conducting research on human subjects in the context of research into ethnic groups”.*

Comprehensive short-answer questions comprising a representation analysis, followed by a second task involving an extended response, was the most popular choice for assessing this outcome.

SPECIFIC INFORMATION

Unit 4: Community, social movements and social change

Outcome 1

*Analyse the experience of community generally and analyse and evaluate a specific community.*

**Task type options**

One or more of the following:

* a multimedia presentation
* a research report
* structured questions
* an extended response
* an essay.

The scope of this outcome requires students to investigate changes to the concept of community and the experiences of community generally, before exploring a specific community in greater detail.

Most schools demonstrated the use of multiple SAC tasks to assess Outcome 1 and this is strongly encouraged. Some schools designed a multimedia presentation and research report as their key SAC task. Where a PowerPoint presentation of a community is set as the main SAC task, it is important that schools ensure that:

* the task adequately and appropriately covers the key knowledge and key skills, particularly analysing and evaluating the influences of various changes, characteristics and factors
* the task should also be able to elicit responses to obtain a spread of results for a group of students
* the conditions of the task are appropriate to ensure authentication issues are addressed (completed mainly in class, ensuring that students are assessed on work that is genuinely their own).

Gaps in analysis were evident particularly in examples of geographical characteristics that focused purely on location. Whilst the location of a community can certainly impact on one’s overall experience, the simple act of being able to get to the community (due to distance, public transport etc.), is not enough for students to be able to provide a sophisticated analysis of the community experience overall.

Most schools chose to set extended response questions as a set of structured questions completed under test conditions. The length and type of questions varied, with most including a question regarding changes to the concept of community generally, focusing on Tonnies, followed by an extended response question regarding their specific community.

The questions relating to the changes to the concept of community were generally well presented, with appropriate use of instructional words and marking allocation. While there was a strong focus on Tonnies and ICT in these questions, very few required students to explore the sociocultural changes that can impact on the changing definition of community over time. Schools are encouraged to explore a variety of sociocultural factors with their students and ask students to consider how these factors may have created a shift in the definition of community over time.

Some questions relating to ‘ethical methodology’ required students to focus on the definitions of the ethical guidelines, rather than their application. Schools are encouraged to ask students to explain how and why ethical guidelines were applied during their community case studies, with a specific focus on the nature of the community itself.

For some of the questions, the mark allocations for the tasks did not sufficiently indicate to students the differences between higher and lower order questions. It would be beneficial for students to understand how each component is being individually assessed.

Outcome 2

*Analyse the nature and purpose of social movements and evaluate their influence on social change.*

**Task type options**

One or more of the following:

* a multimedia presentation
* a research report
* structured questions
* an extended response
* an essay.

Outcome 2 requires students to explore the nature and purpose of social movements generally and then explore the nature and purpose of one specific social movement and its subsequent interrelated components. Most schools demonstrated the use of multiple SAC tasks to assess Outcome 2 and this is strongly encouraged. Through this outcome, students ‘develop an understanding of the purpose, evolution, power and outcomes of social movements’. It is important that SACs provide students with the opportunity to make evaluative statements regarding their social movement’s ability to create change. While many of the questions in SAC tasks submitted through the audit asked students to discuss the influence of the movement on social change, it would be beneficial to guide the students to provide a more detailed evaluation. That is, an exploration of how much change, the type of change, the success of the change and their use of power to achieve this change, despite any resistance they may face from a legitimate opposition.

Similarly, while many of the case studies submitted through the audit were social movements that would enable students to sufficiently explore the interrelated components of type, emergence, stage, power, opposition and influence on change, schools are encouraged to refer to the guidelines outlined in the introductory comments of Outcome 2in the study design.

Whilst historical social movements are perfectly acceptable during the exploration of the nature and purpose of social movements, contemporary examples would provide students with greater scope for analysis and evaluation of the nature and purpose of one specific social movement and an understanding of its interrelated components.

Most schools chose to set extended response questions as a set of structured questions completed under test conditions. The length and type of questions varied, with most including a question regarding the nature and purpose of social movements generally (types, stages, emergence theories), followed by an extended response question regarding their specific social movement.

As with Outcome 1, some of the questions in SAC tasks submitted for Outcome 2 did not provide students with sufficient information to distinguish between a higher order thinking question and a short answer comprehension question. Teachers are encouraged to allocate a proportionate number of marks to the response that is expected for each question. Similarly, teachers are encouraged to reflect these marks accordingly in an appropriate marking guide or set of marking descriptors.