

2021 VCE Sociology external assessment report

General comments

Responses to the 2021 Sociology examination paper included a range of interesting case studies and issues. Students who produced stronger responses drew upon representation material and external evidence as directed. The use of explicit evidence assisted students to explore ideas in a meaningful rather than superficial manner.

When exploring the Australian Indigenous culture ‘issue’ and case study groups, it is important for students to draw upon a range of carefully considered sources of evidence. For example, the exploration of racism in sport needs to go beyond watching a single documentary, such as *The Australian Dream*.

Following are some important features of the VCE Sociology Study Design that can assist students and teachers with examination preparation.

- Definitions of key concepts and theories are outlined in the introduction to each area of study.
- The Australian Indigenous culture issue explored needs to be examined using publicly accessible material produced in the last 10 years.
- When guiding students to select an ethnic group case study, a religion should not be chosen.
- The community group selected as a case study cannot be the same as the ethnic group case study.
- When selecting a social movement case study, a specific movement rather than a broad category is required. For example LGBTI+ is a category, but Australian Marriage Equality is a social movement. In addition, the selected movement needs to be studied in its current context.

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 | 29 | 62 | 2.5 |

This question required students to describe how the change to the national anthem might support or limit public awareness of Australian Indigenous culture.

For full marks, students were required to:

- demonstrate an understanding of awareness (i.e. the information known about Australian Indigenous culture)
- provide a description of how this change supports awareness of Australian Indigenous culture (e.g. the change acknowledges the history of Indigenous cultures in Australia [60 000+ years]); or provide a description of how this change limits awareness of Australian Indigenous culture (e.g. the change may be viewed as tokenistic)
- make a link to one of the representations to support the response.

This question was answered well by many students. Higher-scoring responses explored awareness rather than misconceptions or views about Australian Indigenous culture.

Question 2

| Marks | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | Average |
|-------|---|----|----|----|---------|
| % | 9 | 22 | 30 | 39 | 2.0 |

This question required students to explain one culturally relativistic Australian Indigenous response to the change to the national anthem.

For full marks, students needed to:

- demonstrate an understanding of cultural relativism. For example:
 - Cultural relativism refers to the practice of understanding a culture by its own standards. It refers to the idea that a person's beliefs, values and practices should be understood based on that person's own culture, rather than be judged against the criteria of another.
- identify one Australian Indigenous response to the change. For example:
 - Representation 1: Peter Vickery – 'Frankly I'm elated', Anthony Mundine – 'the old song should be scrapped altogether', Ian Hamm – 'a good step ... it's just one step'
 - Representation 2: Ken Wyatt – 'real reconciliation ... acknowledgement of shared histories'
- explain how the Australian Indigenous response connects to cultural relativism or show how Indigenous Australians demonstrated cultural relativism in their response to the change.

Question 3

| Marks | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | Average |
|-------|---|---|----|----|----|---------|
| % | 4 | 8 | 25 | 36 | 27 | 2.8 |

This question was answered well by many students. It involved an exploration of how the change to the national anthem relates to reconciliation.

For full marks, students needed to:

- identify the change to the national anthem as a form of symbolic reconciliation (i.e. use of gestures and symbols)
- identify an example of reconciliation from Representation 1. For example:
 - Scott Morrison – ‘I believe it adds much’, ‘the stories of the many First Nations people whose stewardship we rightly acknowledge and respect’; Peter Vickery – ‘words of inclusion’; Andrea Romano – ‘still working for awareness, inclusivity and equality’
- identify an example of reconciliation from Representation 2. For example:
 - Ken Wyatt – ‘a call to look forward in unity’, ‘is real reconciliation’, ‘we as a nation stand more united and together today’, ‘it acknowledges the sorrow’, ‘being “one” reflects who we are as a nation and as a people’, ‘One demonstrates the hope ... one signals our genuine commitment to ensure that no Australian is left behind’ or ‘commit to the journey as we continue to walk together’
- explain how the act of changing the lyrics demonstrates an act of reconciliation (e.g. recognising injustice and inequity or improving relationships).

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

The change to the national anthem can be identified as symbolic reconciliation as the ‘significant tweak ... [acknowledging] the country’s ancient past’ is a gesture focusing on the rights of Indigenous Australians through actions and gestures with the aim to achieve equality.

Question 4

| Marks | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | Average |
|-------|----|----|----|----|----|---------|
| % | 11 | 16 | 21 | 42 | 10 | 2.3 |

This question asked students to compare Australia’s current ethnic diversity to that of another developed country.

Students were required to:

- provide an example of Australia’s ethnic diversity (e.g. net migration rate, languages spoken or religions practised)
- provide an example of another developed country’s ethnic diversity
- explore one or more differences in ethnic diversity between the two developed countries
- explore one or more similarities in ethnic diversity between the two developed countries (e.g. number of official languages spoken or government policy impacting on diversity).

Higher-scoring responses accurately addressed the command term ‘compare’. Specifically, they explored both the similarities and differences in ethnic diversity between the two developed countries.

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

Canada, a developed country in North America has a similar ethnic diversity with 24.1% of their population being migrants (CIA World Factbook) ... is similar to Australia. However, whilst very similar there is a difference as Canada has two official languages (French and English) whereas Australia only has one (English).

Question 5

| Marks | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | Average |
|-------|---|---|----|----|----|----|----|---------|
| % | 8 | 9 | 17 | 19 | 21 | 13 | 13 | 3.3 |

This question required students to demonstrate how the concepts of ethnocentrism and the 'other' related to the experience of ethnicity.

For full marks, students needed to:

- demonstrate an understanding of the concept of ethnocentrism. For example:
 - Ethnocentrism refers to the practice of judging another culture by the standards of one's own culture.
- demonstrate an understanding of the concept of the 'other'. For example:
 - The 'other' is a construction of fundamental difference between people or groups. Often this difference is more perceived than real because judgements are projected onto different groups from one cultural viewpoint.
- identify and connect an example of ethnocentrism to the experience of ethnicity. For example:
 - Ethnocentric thinking prompted racist behaviour towards a specific ethnic group, thus leading to a negative experience of ethnicity.
- identify and connect an example of othering to the experience of ethnicity. For example:
 - Feeling othered led members of a specific ethnic group to feel alienated and therefore tainted their experience of ethnicity.
- support their response with evidence studied this year.

Higher-scoring responses made explicit links between the concepts and the negative experiences of individuals or groups.

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

Another example of ethnocentrism was experienced by Hazara teenager Emma who says at work she "often has customers who say racist things to [her]" as they have ethnocentric views of certain ethnic groups, which creates 'the other' in society ... Emma may feel marginalised ...

Question 6

| Marks | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | Average |
|-------|---|---|----|----|----|---------|
| % | 1 | 4 | 11 | 25 | 60 | 3.4 |

This question was answered well by many students. They were required to use the material from Representation 3 to explain why the group Fab and Forty Female Outdoor Adventures is a community.

For full marks, students needed to:

- demonstrate an understanding of the concept of community. For example:
 - 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.
- relate two or more features of the group to characteristics of the concept of community
- refer to Representation 3 to provide evidence. For example:
 - '1500 members', 'private' online group, 'women aged over 40 years', share 'love of nature and adventure', provide 'support and assistance'.

Question 7

| Marks | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | Average |
|-------|---|---|---|----|----|----|----|---------|
| % | 3 | 1 | 7 | 13 | 28 | 24 | 25 | 4.4 |

This question required students to explain how two factors might influence feelings of exclusion within the Fab and Forty Female Outdoor Adventures group.

For full marks, students needed to:

- demonstrate an understanding of the concept of exclusion. For example:
 - Exclusion occurs when a group or a person has been left out or prohibited from participating in something. When members feel excluded, they tend to experience isolation, alienation and, in many cases, anger, frustration and resentment. They generally feel as though they have been left out or prohibited from participating in the community.
- identify and explain how two factors may lead to feelings of exclusion. For example:
 - The inability to afford the appropriate equipment for the outdoor activities may result in some of the members missing out and feeling disappointed.
- refer to Representation 3 to support their response.

Higher-scoring responses linked the factor identified to specific feelings. For example, economic resources might prevent members from joining or fully participating in the community. As a result, people may feel isolated, ashamed or disconnected. Responses that did not score well did not link the factors to feelings.

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

... in the case of 'Fab and Forty Female outdoor Adventures', the members must be 'female' or essentially identify as 'a woman'. This limitation excludes males and those with other gender identities from participating which can again influence feelings of not being welcomed.

Question 8

| Marks | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | Average |
|-------|----|----|----|----|----|---------|
| % | 12 | 32 | 24 | 16 | 16 | 2.0 |

This question required students to examine how a social movement was formed, with reference to new social movements (NSMs) theory.

For full marks, students needed to:

- identify a social movement whose emergence could be explained by NSMs theory
- demonstrate an understanding of NSMs theory. For example:
 - New social movements theory asserts that people who join social movements are motivated by quality-of-life issues rather than economic concerns.
- link features of the NSMs theory to the emergence of the social movement examined.

Higher-scoring responses avoided movements whose emergence is best explained by relative deprivation theory.

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

The formation of this movement can be explained by New Social Movement (NSM) theory, which describes new and modern movements that focus on improving social and physical environments and are concerned with the 'life world' (Habermas). Animals Australia is a NSM, as it is concerned with the environment of animals and also utilises ICT.

Question 9

| Marks | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | Average |
|-------|----|---|----|----|----|----|----|---------|
| % | 13 | 5 | 11 | 18 | 21 | 17 | 15 | 3.4 |

This question required students to examine the influence of a social movement they studied in achieving social change. They needed to examine how two factors assisted or prevented this change.

For full marks, students needed to:

- demonstrate an understanding of social change. For example:
 - Social change refers to the alteration of culture and social institutions over time, reflected in social behaviour. Social change may be slow or rapid depending on the type of change desired.
- identify a social movement and describe their desired social change
- identify two factors and explain how each was connected to social change. For example:
 - access to power, stage of the social movement, the movement's opposition or the movement's leadership.

Lower-scoring responses did not make explicit links to social change.

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

The second factor that prevented the goal of legalising same-sex marriage was a cultural factor ... The opposition specifically was the Australian Christian Lobby (A.C.L) who had long been promoting gay conversion therapy and had a fairly big influence on society, arguing that it 'is okay to say no' to same-sex marriage as it was 'a sin'. However, due to the millions of people who gathered to protest, do rallies, send out online hashtags such as #Vote yes, the A.M.E.M [Australian Marriage Equality movement] managed ... to legalise same-sex marriage.

Section B

In preparing students for their examination, teachers are reminded that the extended response answers are assessed against specific criteria. These criteria are outlined in the [VCE Sociology examination specifications](#), as well as being listed on the last page of the examination paper.

Stronger responses to Section B included an exploration of the individual and interrelated elements of these complex questions. In addition, they were supported by relevant sourced evidence. Many responses were incomplete or underdeveloped. They also referred to general anecdotes rather than specific evidence.

Question 1

| Marks | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | Average |
|-------|----|----|----|----|----|---|---|---|---|---|----|---------|
| % | 16 | 12 | 12 | 15 | 13 | 9 | 7 | 6 | 6 | 3 | 1 | 3.5 |

This question required students to discuss the implications of an Indigenous and a non-Indigenous response to an issue studied this year.

Students were required to:

- identify and briefly describe one issue relating to Australian Indigenous culture
- demonstrate an understanding of awareness (i.e. knowledge and understanding) and views (i.e. opinions and perceptions)
- identify and outline one Indigenous response to the issue
- identify and outline one non-Indigenous response to the issue

- link each response to the likely shaping of public views. This impact may have been positive and/or negative
- use relevant sourced evidence to support their discussion.

Higher-scoring responses discussed the implications of these responses for the shaping of views of Australian Indigenous culture, for example, how and in what way a culturally relative or ethnocentric view might encourage or impede reconciliation.

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

Evidence of shifting public views of AIC [Australian Indigenous culture] can be seen through the 2019 Essential poll which states that a majority of its respondents support Constitutional Recognition ... showing the shift in public awareness and views.

Question 2

| Marks | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | Average |
|-------|---|---|---|----|----|----|----|---|---|---|----|---------|
| % | 8 | 7 | 9 | 16 | 17 | 17 | 10 | 7 | 5 | 2 | 1 | 4.1 |

This question required students to analyse how customs and traditions, as well as social attitudes, can act as a barrier and enabler to inclusion.

Students were required to:

- demonstrate an understanding of barrier, enabler and inclusion. For example:
 - Barrier refers to obstacles that prevent people from feeling a sense of belonging and inclusion in Australia’s multicultural society.
 - Enabler refers to opportunities and options that make inclusion possible for people living in Australia’s multicultural society.
 - Inclusion occurs when a group or person is included and integrated into a group and made to feel a part of something. Inclusion often involves a sense of belonging.
- provide an overview of a specific ethnic group
- identify and describe a custom or tradition related to the ethnic group, and explain how this may be a barrier and enabler to inclusion
- identify and describe how a social attitude may be a barrier and enabler to inclusion
- use relevant sourced evidence to support their analysis.

Higher-scoring responses made clear links to the notion of inclusion. For example, a racist social attitude towards an ethnic group may result in a person not gaining employment, thus leading to feelings of exclusion.

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

One ethnic group studied this year is that of the Pakistani-Australian group of Endeavour Hills ... Several participants of this group reported feeling “included” and “provided for” when given a room to complete their prayers.

A barrier is social attitudes, including ... racist and discriminatory remarks ... have shown the negative social attitudes of some, preventing feelings of inclusion.

Question 3

| Marks | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | Average |
|-------|----|---|----|----|----|----|---|---|---|---|----|---------|
| % | 12 | 8 | 12 | 16 | 18 | 14 | 8 | 5 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 3.6 |

This question required students to explain why members of a community may have different perspectives on the sense of community. It also required links to how ethical methodology should be used when researching communities.

Students were required to:

- demonstrate an understanding of the concepts of community and sense of community. For example:
 - 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.
 - Sense of community refers to the feelings of inclusion, belonging and connectedness experienced during that participation and a belief that needs will be met through involvement in the group; or it can refer to feelings of exclusion, where members feel as though they have been left out or prohibited from participating in the community.
- demonstrate an understanding of ethical methodology. For example:
 - Ethical methodology refers to the steps in sociological research that ensure correct ethical guidelines are followed as outlined by The Australian Sociological Association (TASA).
- provide an overview of a specific community
- explore two or more perspectives regarding the 'sense of community'
- explore the reason/s why sense of community may differ
- comment on how ethical methodology was or should be used when engaging in research
- use relevant sourced evidence to support their response.

High-scoring responses identified specific reasons why sense of community can differ, for example, the age, role, lived experience or location of the group members. Higher-scoring responses linked the notion of sense of community to ethical methodology. For example, engaging in ethical methodology may prompt participants to feel safe enough to share their experiences.

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

It was also explained that to maintain confidentiality, students would be referred to under pseudonyms (fake names) ... Guided by ethical methodology participants were able to disclose their experiences through a series of interview questions, where it was revealed that while some members of this group 'genuinely enjoy school' ... others consider a differing viewpoint.

Question 4

| Marks | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | Average |
|-------|----|---|----|----|----|----|---|---|---|---|-----|---------|
| % | 18 | 6 | 12 | 18 | 15 | 12 | 9 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 0.5 | 3.3 |

This question required students to analyse how power assists or impedes a social movement's transition from the emergence to bureaucratisation stage of the social movement lifecycle.

Students were required to:

- demonstrate an understanding of the concept of social movement. For example:
 - A social movement is commonly defined as an organised group or activity, which encourages or discourages social change through collective action.

- demonstrate an understanding of the concept of power according to Max Weber (i.e. Weber claimed that every society is based on power, which he defined as the ability to achieve desired ends despite resistance from others).
- demonstrate an understanding of a social movement's lifecycle (i.e. social movements may follow a process by which they emerge, coalesce and bureaucratise, leading to their success or failure and therefore decline).
- provide an overview of one social movement
- provide a description of the social movement in the emergence stage
- explore how power was / was not able to be used by the movement in the emergence stage
- provide a description of the social movement in the bureaucratisation stage
- explore how power was / was not able to be used by the movement during the bureaucratisation stage
- use relevant sourced evidence to support their analysis.

Higher-scoring responses referenced Max Weber's theory of power. In addition, they noted that social movements with greater access to power were better able to progress to the bureaucratisation stage. Similarly, those with less power were unable or took longer to move to this stage.

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

Power as defined by Max Weber is "the ability to meet desired ends despite resistance" ... During emergence, Greenpeace had limited power, due to having limited resources and undefined tactics. So, as a result of this, Greenpeace resorted to using the power of the media, through "sound bites" ... They used these "sound bites to gain momentum through creating "public outcry" by exposing nuclear testing.