

# SOCIETY AND CULTURE

In 1996 2690 candidates presented for the examination in Society and Culture, of whom 636 presented for 3 Unit.

## 2/3 UNIT

### Section I : Concepts and Methodologies of the Syllabus

#### Question 1

This is a compulsory question and students should be aware that not all parts of this question are of equal value, therefore more time should be allocated to part (d) which has the greatest mark value, i.e. 12.

(a)

Here students were shown a diagram illustrating the fundamental course concepts.

*Explain the interrelationship between any TWO of these concepts.*

*How might this interrelationship be affected by changes in Australia over the next five years?*

The better responses gave good definitions of the specific concepts showing the present relationships as well as changes over the next 5 years. These candidates drew on studies that showed original thought and discussed likely changes and plausible scenarios, not fantasies.

Weaker responses were repetitive and confused about the interrelationship of the concepts, and issues of the future were not discussed.

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- (b) Here candidates were shown drawings representing Law, government, the media, religion, work and family.

*In relation to ONE institution that you have studied, identify TWO changes that are taking place.*

*What factors are contributing to these changes?*

The better responses clearly understood the term *institution*, stated the changes and gave a full range of factors. Their answers were supported with relevant examples based on fact or theory and a strong information base. These candidates referred to statistics on migration, legislative innovations (Family Law Act) and socially important inventions (the contraceptive pill, etc).

Weaker responses generalised about institutions and did not explain the changes taking place or try to account for them. Some made sweeping comments such as *men are now all staying home with the kids*, with illogical connections between points that were made.

- (c)

Social researchers use a variety of methods to collect data. The methods used depend on the specific topic chosen for research.

*State a specific research topic of interest to you.*

*Specify TWO methods of research most suitable for collecting data on your chosen topic.*

*Discuss briefly the relative strengths and weaknesses of ONE of these methods for conducting your research.*

The better answers specified two methodologies, chose one, clearly showed its strengths and weaknesses and successfully applied them to the topic selected. These candidates obviously drew on their own extended study.

Weaker responses quoted inappropriate research topics and stated only one research methodology, when two were required. Similarly, the strengths and weaknesses were presented in a very cursory manner.

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(d)

Here candidates were shown four pictures of communication technology.

*Identify at least THREE of the ways in which communication technology and information systems are changing the lives of individuals and groups within society.*

*What influences will these changes have on the values and beliefs of individuals and groups in the future?*

The better answers briefly explained three changes in technology and then, using the concepts of the course, identified their effect on society. These responses were specifically related to individuals and groups as required by the question.

Weaker responses presented generalisations often unconnected to the question. Such responses were repetitious and rambling and reflected both lack of planning and time allocation, often demonstrating no development.

### SECTION II : Depth Studies

#### Question 2 : Intercultural Communication

Approximately 23% of candidates attempted this question.

Breaking down the complexities of the questions into their necessary components showed that some students lacked preparation in the interpretation of examination questions. The lack of basic knowledge of the meanings of *assess* (Question 2(a)) and *explain* (Question 2(b)) was clearly seen and should be addressed by frequent practice in interpreting questions and responding to them.

(a)

*Assess the role of the family and ONE other group in assisting and restricting intercultural understanding.*

*In your answer, refer to TWO of the following:*

- *identity*
- *values*
- *communication*
- *socialisation processes.*

The better responses interpreted the question, answering all parts, expressing their information well. Responses in this category also showed awareness of the complexity of the question, incorporating sections into a whole response that reflected a clearly focused understanding of the topic.

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Weaker responses were not focused on the topic and resembled rambling storytelling with a descriptive overload of irrelevant material. These answers obviously did not understand the concepts, in some cases omitting any reference to them altogether.

(b)

*In relation to a particular culture that you have studied, explain how any **THREE** aspects of that culture may lead to intercultural misunderstandings and conflict with another culture or group.*

*In your answer, refer to **TWO** of the following:*

- *stereotype*
- *values*
- *customs*
- *language.*

*How can mutual understanding and cooperation be improved in relation to the aspects you have identified?*

The better responses clearly defined the concepts, explained or clarified them, giving specific examples to back up general statements. They referred consistently back to the question, using it as a structure for their response. In these responses candidates interpreted and adapted the communication model to the question rather than simply inserting the standard model into their answers. These students clearly understood that the model represents a two-way process.

In weaker responses, little social literacy was displayed and examples were limited or very basic. There were little or no links to the question, with stereotyping of cultures or races being stated as fact. Responses in the weaker category displayed a definite lack of knowledge of the topic and concepts, with some being clearly related to social inequality, prejudice and discrimination rather than to intercultural communication.

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### Question 3 : Religion and Belief

This Depth Study attracted 28% of the candidature.

(a)

Religion is not just a body of doctrine and ritual in connection with spiritual forces. It also plays an important role in shaping society and culture, and personal life.

*Select TWO religions (tribal or world) that you have studied.*

*Compare and contrast their role in shaping society and culture, and personal life.*

*In your answer, refer to TWO of the following:*

- *life cycle*
- *spiritual leaders*
- *ideology*
- *magic.*

In the better responses candidates answered all parts of the question in an integrated format and clearly understood the *compare and contrast* instruction. In their answers they considered how religions shape society, culture and people and showed a thorough knowledge of two religions. Their ideas were logical and well organised, and showed an understanding of contemporary concerns of two specific religions.

In weaker responses candidates found the question complex and, therefore, difficult. The need to choose TWO religions and TWO concepts and compare and contrast their role in society, culture and personal life was poorly handled. These responses tended to concentrate on some parts of the question, completely ignoring other sections.

(b)

Religion and belief change as a result of changes in society.

*Critically discuss this statement.*

*In your answer, show how TWO religions (tribal or world) and their belief systems have responded to changes in society.*

The better candidates addressed all aspects of the question, showing a thorough knowledge of two religions and beliefs resulting from societal changes over a period of time. Most candidates in this category used a case or issue to demonstrate changes, supporting their facts with specific examples of influences that shaped or inhibited these changes. Candidates showed an awareness of the complexity of the question and tended to use it to structure their response. Concepts were clearly defined and were clarified by specific examples throughout. In their responses these candidates showed a sound knowledge of historical aspects and contemporary concerns of both the specific religions as well as an understanding of the terms *compare and contrast* and *critically discuss* and their responses were, therefore, well organised, logical and analytical.

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The weaker responses showed a lack of understanding of the question, course concepts and social literacy. The range of cultures chosen was very limited although highly descriptive; sometimes the answers reflected intercultural insensitivity. Many answers in this category did not address the question but submitted prepared or rote-learned answers which had little to do with the topic and, in a large number of cases, incorrect or confused facts were often supplied.

### Question 4 : Social Inequality, Prejudice and Discrimination

This Depth Study attracted approximately 75% of the candidature.

(a)

*What do you understand by the concepts 'class' and 'ethnicity'?*

*To what extent do these concepts explain the existence of social inequality in Australia today?*

The better responses showed a clear understanding of the concepts of *class* and *ethnicity*, offering analytical discussion and sophisticated argument, and addressing all aspects of the question. They contained accurate examples and offered a high level of social literacy. Moreover, these candidates clearly linked class and ethnicity to degrees of social inequality in Australia.

The weaker responses offered poor definitions of the key words or showed a lack of understanding of them. Such responses were often anecdotal, while discussion was irrelevant or contained inaccurate data. *Class* tended to be defined in terms of wealth and the information was presented in an unstructured way.

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(b)

It is possible to live in the 1990s without realising that there are distinct social groups, and that some of these groups are subjected to prejudice and discrimination in society

*Discuss this statement in relation to ONE social group that has been subjected to prejudice and discrimination.*

*What are the possible solutions to reducing such prejudice and discrimination for this group?*

*In your answer, refer to TWO of the following:*

- *legislation*
- *direct action*
- *community cooperation*
- *positive discrimination.*

The better answers showed that the candidates understood the concepts and could offer solutions within a well integrated response. These answers emphasised not only historical aspects, but also contemporary situations, referring, for example, to current legislation. The better responses examined not only current and past solutions, but also their impact in terms of degrees of success as well as the development of possible solutions for the future.

Weaker responses mentioned solutions only in passing, but gave little or no in-depth discussion. Of the solutions, only legislation seemed to be understood, with direct action and community co-operation not being considered. These candidates used a prepared case study which tended to be very generalised, lacking in supportive analysis and often containing inaccuracies.

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### Question 5 : Work, Leisure and Sport

Approximately 43% of candidates attempted this Depth Study.

(a)

Candidates were shown a cartoon of a young family at breakfast.

*The above cartoon gives one view of work.*

*What do you understand by the concept 'work'?*

*Discuss how the changing nature of work is affecting personal identity?*

*In your answer, refer to TWO of the following*

- *alienation*
- *employment and unemployment*
- *status and gender*
- *technology.*

The better candidates clearly understood work across a broad range of possibilities - paid, unpaid, full-time, part-time, casual and job share. This was then linked effectively to discussion of the changing nature of work and how identity for both men and women is changing as a result of this process. Many candidates dealt with change from an historical perspective and went on to analyse contemporary work situations, e.g. down-sizing, working from home, automation, information technologies.

Weaker responses described *work*, often defining it as just that activity *that you get paid for*. Such answers were unable to integrate the two concepts effectively and often relied too heavily on the personal identity referred to in the question by presenting anecdotal evidence.



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(b)

Individual and general social patterns of leisure and sport depend on social class, gender and available time.

*To what extent does this statement explain the patterns of leisure **or** sport in society today?*

*In your answer consider how the patterns of leisure or sport are being affected by TWO of the following:*

- *technology*
- *the leisure industry **or** sports industry*
- *ethics*
- *customs.*

Establishing links between social class, gender and available time and either leisure or sport was the fundamental requirement of this question. Quality answers were able to achieve this through links to two aspects from the question. In these responses candidates showed clearly their understanding of how various concepts were linked and gave concrete examples to illustrate them.

Poorer answers made passing mention of the concepts but did not effectively link or integrate them. Such answers neither offered explanations of concepts nor treated any area in depth. Many contained anecdotal references but ignored the quotation.

### Question 6 : Popular Culture

This Depth Study attracted approximately 29% of candidates.

(a)

What are the characteristics of popular culture?

Analyse the interactions between aspects of popular culture and the individual.

*In your answer, refer to TWO of the following:*

- *heroes*
- *cults*
- *icons*
- *paraphernalia*
- *myths.*

Here the better responses provided sound discussion and specific examples of the characteristics of popular culture rather than supplying simply a rote-learned definition. These candidates knew one case study thoroughly and were aware of the conceptual framework. Their answers were organised, contained logical arguments which analysed interaction between individuals and popular culture, referred to specific and relevant examples, and synthesised sources, theories and examples into a coherent answer relevant to the question asked.

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Weaker answers failed to provide any analysis, and were descriptive but gave very few specific examples. Concepts were simplified, with *interaction* being seen as a generalised americanisation of Australian Culture. If two areas were mentioned, it was with little understanding, *rock stars and movie stars* being treated as heroes. Some aspects of the question were simply described without any effort to frame a response to the question asked.

(b)

Outline major changes in a popular culture that you have studied.

Explain the reasons for changes in that popular culture.

*In your answer, refer to TWO of the following:*

- *power*
- *conflict*
- *socialisation*
- *access*
- *ideology.*

Good responses integrated all aspects of the question; in them candidates emphasised the element of dramatic change in popular culture, explained changes that have occurred over a period of time and, in order to explain fully the reasons for such changes, two items were selected and illustrated with case studies. References were made to social theorists and were explained well by the candidates. Some used models, linking such models to explanations of change and social theory. Concepts of Society and Culture were well understood and applied to the reasons for change.

Although weaker answers dealt with change, they took the form of a historical narrative. Very few offered reasons to explain change and, where mention was made, explanations were not developed. Such answers made little or no reference to social theorists and, thus, did not link social theory to reasons for change. Concepts such as *power* and *conflict* were not well understood and some candidates did not appear to have sufficient information to expand their answers. Information relating to concepts was discussed in isolated paragraphs, the simplification of the concepts making it difficult for candidates to link data to the items chosen.

### 3 UNIT

#### Question 1

(a)

Identify a basic human issue that you have studied.

*Evaluate the impact of this basic human issue on TWO of the following levels of society:*

- *individual*
- *small social group*
- *large social institution*
- *national*
- *international.*

The better responses were of a very high standard and covered all levels required. In them candidates explained clearly the nature of a basic human issue, identified a specific issue that they had studied and illustrated it with a range of examples integrating course concepts and taken from a variety of sources.

Weaker responses selected an inappropriate issue and/or made vague comments about the specific issue. Some wrote *prepared* answers which did not relate to the question asked.

(b)

In many societies unelected officials and groups can have more power than the general public or elected politicians.

Critically discuss this statement.

*In your answer, use TWO of the following concepts:*

- *power*
- *interest groups*
- *bureaucratisation*
- *democratisation.*

The better answers offered perceptive comments about the quotation and then used relevant examples to support their viewpoint. In these responses candidates clearly showed their understanding of the more subtle nature of power.

Weaker responses made little or no reference to any concepts and presented flawed definitions. Some candidates interpreted *power* simply in terms of *force*.

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(c)

Labour Force Participation Rates, Australia, 1980 and 1995 (%)						
Age Group (Years)	Rates (%) in November 1980		Rates (%) in November 1995		Change 1980-95 in percentage points	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
15 to 19	58.5	56.5	58.6	55.6	+0.1	-0.9
20 to 24	92.0	62.5	88.5	77.5	-3.5	+15.0
25 to 34	97.3	42.6	94.2	65.3	-3.1	+22.7
35 to 44	97.4	46.8	94.0	71.8	-3.4	+25.0
45 to 54	95.7	42.1	90.0	62.7	-5.7	+20.6
55 to 59	90.7	29.3	75.8	37.2	-14.9	+7.9
59 to 64	78.5	17.3	51.8	16.8	-26.7	-0.5
65+	23.2	3.8	9.3	2.8	-13.9	-1.0
Total %	82.7	39.6	75.2	52.1	-7.5	+12.5
Total number in labour force	3.7 million	1.8 million	4.9 million	3.5 million		
<p>The table above provides data on labour force participation rates (in percentage points) in Australia for 1980 and 1995 by age group and by gender.</p> <p><i>Comment briefly on major changes that have occurred in the labour force participation rates between 1980 and 1995.</i></p> <p><i>Identify and explain TWO reasons for changes in the participation rates.</i></p>						

'Society and Gender', G Lupton, Macmillan Education Australia

Generally this section was the best answered. Most candidates could identify changes and provide reasons for such changes. In good responses they identified and explained two reasons for changes in the labour force participation rates. These candidates showed an appreciation of the complex nature of change in relation to gender roles, with some outlining the historical significance of change or continuity related to levels of society.

Many weaker candidates found *labour force* a difficult concept and their interpretation of statistics was weak, since, in general, they repeated the information presented in the table instead of analysing the reasons for changes in the participation rates.

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### Question 2

(a)

You are employed as a consultant by the country that you have studied to write a report on major strategies for shaping the future of the basic human issue faced by that country.

*In your report:*

- (i) *name the country studied;*
- (ii) *identify the basic human issue facing that country;*
- (iii) *propose and explain TWO strategies for shaping the future and managing change of the basic human issue that you have identified.*

The better answers were well structured and clearly defined a *basic human issue*. They discussed their chosen strategies in depth and constructively evaluated them in relation to future and change. These answers made good use of concepts and theories and clearly analysed the question as a whole, showing sociological insight.

Weaker responses discussed a basic human issue only vaguely, or disregarded this idea altogether. Strategies were not mentioned in some cases, nor was the issue chosen discussed with any depth of understanding.

(b)

People make their history, but they do not make it in circumstances chosen by themselves; rather, they have to make it under already existing conditions that are the result of human actions in the past.

*Critically evaluate this statement in relation to TWO social and cultural continuities and TWO social and cultural changes experienced by the country you have studied.*

The better candidates offered a critical evaluation of the given statement, and showed a high level of social literacy and thinking. In their responses they showed a good knowledge of the country studied and successfully evaluated two social and cultural continuities as well as two social and cultural changes in that country.

Weaker candidates often did not understand or did not mention the quotation. Their answers showed only a confused understanding of any social issues and certainly did not evaluate the statement critically. In many cases information was descriptive and only one example was given.

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(c)

- (i) *Compare and contrast TWO theories that help explain continuity and change in society and culture.*
- (ii) *Evaluate how ONE of these theories explains continuity and change in TWO aspects of the society in the country you have studied.*

The better responses carefully explained two theories and then evaluated one, as required by the question. Here candidates were able to integrate theory and change, having selected the most appropriate theory for the country studied. In the better answers candidates showed the strengths and weaknesses of the theory and examined the concepts of continuity and change. Their discussions were systematic and included detailed examples.

Weaker answers either consisted of descriptions of the theories, or showed little understanding of them. Such responses often ignored parts of the question or contained information which was factually incorrect.

(d)

- Here candidates were shown a cartoon.
- In relation to the country you have studied:*
- (i) *explain what you understand by its possible and preferable futures;*
- (ii) *critically discuss ONE factor supporting, and ONE factor constraining, a preferable future of that country.*
- In your answer, refer to the interactions between:*
- *society*
  - *culture*
  - *environment.*

The better responses included good critical discussion relevant to factors supporting and constraining preferable futures for the specific country. These answers both analysed the specific factors and gave a critical discussion of them.

Weaker answers offered little discussion of preferable futures for their chosen country. Critical discussion was generally lacking in these answers, with candidates having obvious difficulty in discussing *possible and preferable futures*.

## PERSONAL INTEREST PROJECT

In 1996 2804 Personal Interest Projects were examined and, again, high levels of social research and commitment were shown by students.

Good projects reflected a high degree of social literacy, being well focussed and possessing a clear sense of direction. They were logically structured and examined all essential areas. The conceptual nature of the PIP was discussed appropriately and the relevance, usefulness and limitations of methodologies were clearly stated. Outstanding PIPs dealt with inclusions and exclusions and were directly linked to the Central Material. The Logs of good PIPs were sequential and revealed the learning process that had taken place. They were a summary of steps taken rather than a list of events and created a sense of enthusiasm for the Central Material which followed. The Conclusions assessed both the findings of the Central Material and what the student had learnt through the process. Such conclusions were clearly focussed and linked to the introduction. Resource Lists of good PIPs reflected initiative in searching for and investigating a variety of resources. All resources were acknowledged and correctly set out with thoughtful and critical annotations.

Weaker PIPs were very basic in the way in which essential areas were addressed. Some PIPs tended to omit some of the compulsory elements and their introductions lacked substance, purpose and direction. In these PIPs, little attempt was made to explain methodologies or to indicate any awareness of the limitations of the research. These candidates' understanding of the cross-cultural component was poor; the Logs were very short, with Conclusions tending to be vague and lacking in depth. The Resource Lists of these PIPs usually consisted of a list of resources that were outdated and/or irrelevant. Annotations were often lacking or inadequate, with reference details also being inadequate at times.

It was a source of concern that some students had begun their PIPs very early; teachers and students are reminded that the PIP is a component of the HSC section of the Course and, as such, should be developed during that part of the course. Excessively long Logs which included intricate, unnecessary detail and the presentation of *formula* PIPs heavily influenced by some teachers were another source of concern. While it is important that teachers offer guidance to students, especially regarding topic selection, *it is essential that the PIP be the work of the student alone.*

Students are again reminded about drawing conclusions from limited data, when presenting PIPs, as well as the need to develop a clear understanding of the methodologies used. The cross-cultural components should not be *tacked on* nor should there be separate pages on *Concepts* and *Methodologies*.

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Both teachers and candidates are again reminded that topics selected should be manageable in size and must comply with the word limit of 2000-4000 for the Central Material. Logs should document the development of the PIP rather than deliver a *blow by blow* account of that development, and candidates should avoid including excessive and inappropriate appendices.

Attention is also drawn to the need to document adequately references from the Internet and to select only appropriate data if accessing the *net*. Adequate and appropriate data selection, referencing and avoidance of identifying individuals and locations are ethical considerations which should be observed by all social researchers.