



NEW ZEALAND QUALIFICATIONS AUTHORITY
MANA TOHU MĀTAURANGA O AOTEAROA

National Qualifications Framework Levels 1–3, 2006

Sociology

National Moderator's Report

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General Guidance for Assessors of Achievement and Unit Standards

The purpose of external moderation is to provide reassurance that assessor judgments are at the national standard and are made on the basis of assessment materials that are fair and valid.

All assessment materials are expected to:

- give the learner the opportunity to meet the requirements of the standard
- have an assessment schedule that gives evidence of appropriate learner responses and clear judgments at all levels.

The Ministry of Education contracted subject experts to write assessment resources for achievement standards. These are not pre-moderated. The intention is that they are modified to suit teaching programmes and learner needs. They do not provide “rules” but suggest different ways of assessing to the nationally registered standard.

General Overall Comment

With the National Certificate in Educational Achievement (NCEA) now embedded as New Zealand's major qualification for secondary students, more schools are offering sociology unit standards for assessment. For a decade the level 2 standards were those most commonly offered (mostly at Year 12) but increasingly schools are developing sociology courses at levels 1 and 3. At level 3, students can accumulate credits for the sociology unit standards and have those credits recognised for university entrance as part of the domain provisions of the university entrance requirements.

The most commonly assessed standards appear to be the quantitative and qualitative research standards. Generally, assessors are handling these standards well and have a good understanding of the research process, which is what the standards actually assess.

Increasingly, assessors are offering other standards and the level 1-3 standards (8989, 8990 and 8991) assessing sociological theories are popular. The special notes for these standards make it clear that there are a number of theoretical frameworks under which sociological theory can be taught and assessed. Assessors can usefully look beyond the functionalism/Marxism/symbolic interactionism framework. A number of very successful assessment activities submitted for moderation have looked at quite specific theories such as theories of Deviance.

8990: *Examine and apply sociological theories to an explanation of human behaviour and social organisation*

The standard has two elements that require separate tasks, but the expectation is that at least two sociological theories must be analysed and applied. The theories chosen are then applied to both elements.

Element 1 requires that the assessee *examine sociological theories* There are three performance criteria, each with a range statement that specifies the number of concepts (1.1), the number of differences (1.2) and the number of theorists (1.3) that must be considered.

A problem has arisen with performance criterion 1.2 which states: *The examination establishes the similarities and differences between the sociological theories* The range statement qualifies this (plural) requirement by specifying *at least one difference*. Assessors

should note the range applies only to differences, and students are expected to find more than one similarity between selected theories.

The second element requires the assessee *apply sociological theories to an explanation of human behaviour and social organisation*. This element has a single performance criterion with a range statement that specifies *at least one example of human behaviour and social organisation*. The difficulty here for assessors is what constitutes sufficiency. One example of human behaviour must be more than a single sentence statement. Assessors need to remember this is a level 2 standard, and (at this level) a sufficient answer would need to make a number of relevant points. Most likely this would require several paragraphs to adequately *apply sociological theories to an explanation*. The application should make a link between the theories and human behaviour and social organisation.