2024 VCE Sociology external assessment report

General comments

The 2024 Sociology examination included a range of interesting examples and case studies. Questions required students to apply their knowledge in very specific ways. Students who paid careful attention to the various parts of complex questions and command terms were able to produce high-scoring responses.

Stronger responses included material from primary and/or secondary sources. Ways to gather this type of information include interviewing research participants and summarising lectures, news articles, documentaries, podcasts and ABS statistical data. Therefore, students are encouraged to use multiple sources when exploring their case studies to ensure they can demonstrate understanding of the following assessment criteria for Section B:

* use and/or evaluation of a range of relevant evidence/sources
* synthesis of evidence to draw conclusions.

To ensure they are meeting the requirements of the Study Design, students are reminded:

* of the distinction between ethnicity and religion; while religion can be considered a non-material aspect of ethnicity, it is not considered an ethnicity in the context of the Study Design
* to explore current movements and to evidence their impact on social change from a range of sources. Movements like the Black Panthers can only be used as illustrative examples when discussing types of movements or the impact of violent/nonviolent tactics.

Students are reminded of the flow-on nature of multiple-part questions, where part b. follows from part a. For example, Question 9a. required students to describe a type of social movement, and Question 9b. required them to discuss the success of this movement. If students discussed a different movement in part b., marks could not be awarded. Outside these multiple-part questions, all questions are standalone. For example, Question 10 asked students to analyse how power was used by a social movement, and many students saw this as a follow-on from Questions 9a. and 9b. and therefore did not provide the context of the movement or its opposition.

In 2024, several areas of the new study design were assessed, with various levels of understanding displayed by students. While many students were able to demonstrate an understanding of Michel Maffesoli’s theory of neo-tribes – loose-knit communities connected by shared interests that are flexible, fluid and less interdependent – the examples chosen did not reflect this type of community. Similarly, many students who were able to provide a general understanding of Erica Chenoweth’s research into the nonviolent tactics used by social movements were not always able to succinctly link this to tactics used by their chosen social movement.

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 been 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.

Question 1a.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Marks | 0 | 1 | 2 | Average |
| % | 7 | 38 | 54 | 1.5 |

This question required students to identify one example of practical reconciliation and one example of symbolic reconciliation from Representation 1. Students are reminded that the command term ‘identify’ means to recognise and name features or elements, and therefore no written explanation of their choice was needed for this response.

To be awarded full marks, students were required to:

* identify an example of practical reconciliation, such as Closing the Gap, the National Congress of First Nations People
* identify an example of symbolic reconciliation, such as Bridge Walks, Apology to the Stolen Generation.

Question 1b.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Marks | 0 | 1 | 2 | Average |
| % | 21 | 42 | 37 | 1.2 |

This question required students to use the examples from Question 1a. to explain the difference between practical and symbolic reconciliation. Students generally answered this question well; however, some students failed to use the examples from Question 1a. to support their explanation.

To be awarded full marks, students were required to:

* explain the difference between practical reconciliation (addressing inequalities between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians) and symbolic reconciliation (recognising historical injustices)
* use aspects of the examples identified in Question 1a. to support their explanation.

Question 2

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Marks | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | Average |
| % | 6 | 2 | 5 | 17 | 31 | 23 | 16 | 4.0 |

This question required students to evaluate (make a judgement on) the success of the process of reconciliation since 2000 and use three examples from Representation 1 to support their contention. Students are reminded to follow the instructions in the questions and only provide three examples from the Representation. Many students were able to select appropriate examples from the representation, but did not connect their examples to the process of reconciliation.

Higher-scoring responses linked the chosen evidence to the process of reconciliation and efforts taken to improve the relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples.

To be awarded full marks, students were required to:

* make a judgement / have a contention, for example, that the process of reconciliation has been successful, partially successful or not successful
* provide three examples since 2000 from Representation 1 to support their contention
* explain how the evidence chosen supports their contention, with links to the process of reconciliation.

The following is an example of a high-scoring response, where the student explains the first piece of evidence well and links it to the process of reconciliation:

Reconciliation refers to the restoration of friendly relationships of mutual understanding and respect between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. It is referred to as a process as it requires long term effort to heal the scars caused from decades of Indigenous inequality and injustice. The ‘apology to the stolen generations’ (2008) to a large extent was successful as it had enabled the traumatic history of Indigenous children to be acknowledged publicly. This allows Indigenous people to feel a sense of healing as their past suppression is not overlooked, rather it has enabled non-Indigenous people to adopt a culturally relativistic mindset of Indigenous culture and sympathise with their loss.

Question 3

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Marks | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | Average |
| % | 25 | 15 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 11 | 6 | 3 | 1 | 0.1 | 0.1 | 2.6 |

This question required students to examine the relationship between one issue related to Australian Indigenous cultures and changing public awareness (knowledge and understanding). As specified by the VCE Sociology Study Design, the issue selected must be from within the last 10 years. The ‘Change the Date of Australia Day’ campaign and repatriation of artefacts were both appropriate common choices. Misconceptions about Australian Indigenous culture, however, were not suitable.

Higher-scoring responses used sourced evidence to support their examination of how and in what way awareness of Australian Indigenous cultures has changed in response to the issue. Many students outlined an appropriate example of an issue but did not link it to changing awareness.

To be awarded full marks, students were required to:

* provide a thorough overview of the issue related to Australian Indigenous cultures, by, for example, outlining the nature of the issue and its historical and political context, and referring to significant Indigenous and non-Indigenous people
* demonstrate an understanding of the term ‘awareness’ (that is, the level of knowledge about Australian Indigenous cultures)
* provide an examination of how awareness of Australian Indigenous cultures has changed or could be expected to change because of the issue
* use relevant sourced evidence to support their answer.

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

The removal of Indigenous artefacts from First Nations peoples has had a pervading impact for 250 years. Due to the dispossession during colonisation, First Nations people have lost over 100,000 cultural artefacts and human remains to overseas collecting institutions such as the British Museum (AIATSIS, 2022) … as a result, awareness, what is known or understood, about Aboriginal culture is severely limited … therefore, this will increase public awareness of Indigenous culture, which one Gwewal man said would ‘benefit [them] and [their] whole community’ [SBS].

Question 4

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Marks | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Average |
| % | 5 | 12 | 25 | 30 | 19 | 10 | 2.8 |

This question required students to explain how Australia’s 2022 World Cup team is an example of contemporary multiculturalism in Australia, using two examples from Representation 2. Students needed to follow the instructions in the questions and only provide two examples from the representation.

Some students discussed the age of the representation as their explanation for its contemporary nature. This, however, does not explain the contemporary nature of multiculturalism. Many students discussed inclusion in their responses. While inclusion is a by-product of the contemporary concept of multiculturalism, without making this link explicit, students were not addressing the question. Many students incorrectly discussed Australia’s ethnic diversity. Ethnic diversity is a precursor to multiculturalism, but without making the connection between the two, students were unable to address the question.

Higher-scoring responses linked the chosen evidence to the contemporary concept of multiculturalism.

To be awarded full marks, students were required to:

* demonstrate an understanding of the contemporary concept of multiculturalism in Australia, that is, many cultures/ethnicities living together peacefully
* select two relevant examples from the representation
* explain the relationship between their examples and aspects of the concept of multiculturalism.

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

The Australian Institute of Multicultural Affairs aims to promote mutual respect and understanding about different cultures, demonstrated by a team that is ‘diverse and unity’ demonstrating that players come from a variety of ethnicities, and value each others’ differences.

Question 5

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Marks | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Average |
| % | 6 | 10 | 22 | 28 | 23 | 11 | 2.9 |

This question required students to explain how the make-up of Australia’s 2022 World Cup team could have enabled a sense of inclusion for ethnic communities in Australia, using two examples from Representation 2. Students needed to follow the instructions in the question and only provide two examples from the representation.

Many students were able to select appropriate evidence. Some students discussed the multicultural nature of the team without connecting this to its impact on inclusion. Some students were not able to make the connection to ethnic communities but rather spoke about communities overseas or the individual players.

Higher-scoring responses linked the chosen evidence to the sense of inclusion for ethnic communities in Australia.

To be awarded full marks, students were required to:

* demonstrate an understanding of inclusion, that is, being made to feel a part of society through having equal access to the resources and opportunities in society
* select two relevant examples from the representation
* explain the relationship between their examples and inclusion for ethnic communities.

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

Inclusion refers to the ability to engage, participate and have a voice in society. Considering that the ‘Socceroos’ offers a ‘space for migrant communities’ it could make ethnically diverse people feel as if they belong in Australian society. As people see the ‘representation of athletes with diverse background’, it allows people to feel as if their ethnicity is seen, valued and welcomed in Australia.

Question 6

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Marks | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | Average |
| % | 13 | 18 | 18 | 20 | 16 | 10 | 4 | 0.7 | 0.3 | 0.1 | 0 | 2.6 |

This question required students to analyse the relationship between responses to cultural practices and the process of othering. Students were required to use examples from two or more ethnic groups studied throughout the year.

Many students were able to discuss the processing of othering, but did not connect this to cultural processes, instead connecting this process to media representations or political factors.

Higher-scoring responses referred to specific ethnic groups (such as Chinese Australians) rather than religious groups (like Muslims or the Jewish community) and used sourced evidence (primary and/or secondary) to support their analysis. Higher-scoring responses also referred to specific cultural practices; that is, rather than discussing traditional clothing within South Sudanese culture, they discussed the thoub for women and jalabiya for both men and women.

To be awarded full marks, students were required to:

* demonstrate an understanding of the process of othering – the rejection of / opposition to some or many elements of a minority culture, which leads to that culture being labelled as different from the dominant culture
* demonstrate an understanding of cultural practices, behaviours, activities and customs of a particular culture
* provide a description of two or more ethnic groups and relevant cultural practices
* provide an analysis of the relationship between the response to the cultural practices and the process of othering
* use relevant sourced evidence to support their answer.

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

Bosnian Australians celebrating the three-day festival called ‘Borjam Ronaanzachi’ often feel excluded by the Australian population as they are judged for their cultural practices. My participant stated that when celebrating Borjan they were ‘laughed at because of [their] traditional attire’, this exacerbated the process of othering as they were ostracised and alienated due to their cultural differences.

Question 7a.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Marks | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | Average |
| % | 16 | 17 | 23 | 24 | 20 | 2.2 |

This question required students to describe Michael Maffesoli’s theory of ‘neo-tribes’, using an example.

Many students were able to demonstrate their understanding of a neo-tribe but did not provide an appropriate example. For instance, many students used a local sporting group and were therefore unable to successfully link the characteristics of a neo-tribe to the group, such as the community being fluid and community members having less reliance on one another.

Higher-scoring responses successfully linked the characteristics of neo-tribes to their example.

To be awarded full marks, students were required to:

* demonstrate an understanding of the concept of neo-tribes – a loose-knit ‘community’ connected by a shared interest – and the idea of belonging or shared identity that is flexible and fluid and where there is less interdependence between members
* name a community group that can be identified as a neo-tribe, such as gamers or cosplayers
* connect the characteristics of a neo-tribe to the group identified.

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

Michel Maffesoli noted the emergence of neo-tribes as a response to a rise of individualism as well as the digital revolution. Neo-tribes refer to groups that are fluid and interest based, as demonstrated by the 2017 YouTube documentary Assassin’s creed: Beyond the creed, in which members reveal that they can ‘join whenever they have the time’ affirming the fluidity characterised by neo-tribes, as they are extremely independent-based, and people can choose how much they want to engage. Moreover Maffesoli’s neo-tribes often cause the return of the ‘eternal child’, further demonstrated by the gamers who long to ‘have fun in their free time’.

Question 7b.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Marks | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | Average |
| % | 13 | 21 | 27 | 20 | 13 | 5 | 2 | 2.2 |

This question required students to compare (that is, identify the similarities and differences between) Ferdinand Tönnies’s and Michel Maffesoli’s theories of community. Students were also required to use examples to support their comparison.

Many students were able to demonstrate an understanding of both Maffesoli’s and Tönnies’s theories of community but did not provide a comparison of these theories.

To be awarded full marks, students were required to:

* demonstrate an understanding of Tönnies’s theory of community (Gemeinschaft to Gesellschaft)
* demonstrate an understanding of Maffesoli’s theory of neo-tribes
* explore the similarities between the theories
* explore the differences between the theories
* use examples to support their comparison.

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

Both Tönnies and Maffesoli’s theories arise from an identification of a shift in behaviour over time, in an attempt to understand human behaviour and community. While Tönnies identified a shift from an agrarian economy to one dominated by industry and factory during industrialisation and urbanisation during the industrial revolution, Maffesoli identified a shift during a post-modern world created by individualism.

Question 8

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Marks | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | Average |
| % | 9 | 10 | 15 | 22 | 21 | 15 | 6 | 2 | 0.4 | 0.1 | 0 | 3.2 |

This question required students to analyse the interplay between ICT and feelings of belonging, and how this interplay influences the experience of a community studied this year. Students were required to use two examples to support their analysis.

Many students discussed an appropriate community. However, it was clear that some students were drawing from only one source, such as one documentary, and this limited their ability to provide multiple examples and a strong analysis. It is recommended that students study multiple sources when completing their case study.

Higher-scoring responses used sourced evidence to support their analysis of the interplay between ICT and the feelings of belonging and experience of community.

To be awarded full marks, students were required to:

* provide a thorough overview of the selected community, including its name, location and how the group identifies itself
* demonstrate an understanding of belonging and feeling accepted, secure and supported within a community
* demonstrate an understanding of the experience of community and active participation in a meaningful way
* provide an analysis of the relationship between the use of ICT and feelings of belonging and the experience of community
* provide two well-chosen examples to support their analysis
* use relevant sourced evidence to support their answer.

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

The Australian Youth Band uses ICT through message chains on group chats between members. This fosters interaction and communication and the formation of close, interpersonal relationships as there is mutual bonding through ICT.

Contrastingly, the use of ICT can create a digital divide amongst members, causing division and negative experiences of community. An anonymous source through primary research reported that they ‘couldn’t use Facebook at all’ as her fellow Australian Youth Band members, resulting in alienation as it decreases interconnectedness with the band/community.

Question 9a.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Marks | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | Average |
| % | 10 | 21 | 30 | 24 | 16 | 2.2 |

This question required students to describe a social movement, including its type and current stage, using relevant evidence.

As classifying movements can be subjective, it was important that students justify their classification to demonstrate their understanding.

Higher-scoring responses provided a description of the key characteristics of the type and stage of the movement, rather than just identifying their chosen movement.

To be awarded full marks, students were required to:

* provide an overview of one social movement, including its name and aims
* describe the type of movement
* describe the stage of the movement
* use relevant evidence to support their description.

The following is an example of a high-scoring response that addresses all components of the question:

The Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement is a reformative movement as it seeks limited change within existing political systems in society. Such that they call for altering reforms under criminal justice system that addresses police brutality and systematic racism of Black people. In addition, it does not target individuals rather the society as a whole specifically the government and police.

The current stage of the movement is bureaucratisation as it is characterised by high levels of organisation and strategy carried out within formal structures as they maintain strong relationships with the NBA and US democratic party. In addition have a large following seen through the George Floyd protest having 20,000+ protestors (ABC, 2020).

Question 9b.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Marks | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | Average |
| % | 13 | 13 | 22 | 21 | 19 | 9 | 2 | 2.6 |

This question required students to evaluate (make a judgement on) the social change achieved by the movement identified in Question 9a. Students were required to reference the work of Chenoweth and use two examples to support their evaluation.

Students are reminded that Chenoweth uses they/them pronouns.

Many students erroneously attributed the duration of the movement to its lack of success, stating that as the movement has been going for longer than two years, it could not be considered successful according to Chenoweth’s arguments. While in their analysis Chenoweth defined complete success as happening within two years, their work is not predictive and therefore does not mean that movements that continue for longer than two years will not achieve social change.

Many students were able to provide an understanding that nonviolent movements are more likely to be successful than violent movements, however misattributed the extent of this difference.

High-scoring responses were able to connect their examples to Chenoweth’s theory.

To be awarded full marks, students were required to:

* provide a judgement (movement was successful, not successful or partially successful)
* provide an overview of Chenoweth’s work, including their claims that nonviolent civil resistance more often leads to successful social change, as it is often more inclusive
* provide an outline of two strategies used by the movement to achieve change
* link the strategies outlined to Chenoweth’s work
* link the strategies to their contention.

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

Erica Chenoweth’s research discovered that movements that carry out non-violent resistant tactics have higher success rate of 53% compared to violent (26%). The Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement adopted non-violent tactics such as protests which were 87.5% peaceful (ARC, 2020), boycotts and sit-ins. As a result the protests and mass media coverage being the forefront of non-violent resistance as Erica argues will result in success. Allowed the BLM to gain great success as the police reform bill was passed making it easier to prosecute police for misconduct, ban chokehold and compulsory wearing of bodycams, thus achieving their goal of addressing police brutality.

Question 10

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Marks | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | Average |
| % | 15 | 13 | 15 | 17 | 17 | 13 | 7 | 2 | 0.9 | 0.1 | 0 | 2.9 |

This question required students to analyse how power was used by a social movement’s opposition to attempt to prevent the movement from achieving its desired social change.

Many students did not provide an overview of the movement or its opposition and therefore were only able to make superficial connections between the use of power and attempts to prevent the movement from achieving its desired social change.

Higher-scoring responses explored a current social movement, such as Black Lives Matter, rather than a historical movement and used sourced evidence to support their analysis of the use of power by the movement’s opposition to attempt to prevent the movement from achieving social change. Higher-scoring responses were also able to explore the use of the police by government as a form of opposition, rather than a form of opposition in and of themselves.

To be awarded full marks, students were required to:

* provide a thorough overview of the social movement (nature, aim, type and stage) and its opposition
* demonstrate an understanding of different types of power
* provide an analysis of how the use of power by the opposition attempted to prevent the movement from achieving its desired social change
* use relevant sourced evidence to support their answer.

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

The National Farmers Federation (NFF) publicly opposed the goal of AA. They have used French and Raven information informational power to control what information is given to the public and to attempt to control their opinions and prevent AA from achieving a ban on all live exports … NFF also use the formal coercive power by guilting people with the belief that a ban will be ‘taking away many farmers main form of income’ and that only unrealistic and selfish people would do such a thing.