VCE Sociology 2024–2028 – Frequently asked questions

## Teachers are advised to consult this document and other support materials provided on the Sociology study page when implementing the 2024–2028 VCE Sociology Study Design.

## Frequently asked questions (FAQs) will be updated, if necessary, throughout the Study Design. Teachers will be notified of changes via the VCAA Notice to Schools.

Unit 3, Area of Study 1

‘Integration Policy’ is referred to in Unit 3, Area of Study 1; which specific policies does this refer to?

Integration was a term used by those who critiqued assimilation but was not one specific policy. The Australian Law Reform Commission states that:

The term ‘integration’ was sometimes used by the critics of the assimilation policy to denote a policy that recognised the value of Aboriginal culture and the right of Aboriginals to retain their languages and customs and maintain their own distinctive communities, but there was a deliberate effort on the part of the Commonwealth authorities to avoid one-word descriptions of complex policies, and to focus on developing new approaches to problems rather than on long-term aims. ([Changing Policies Towards Aboriginal People | ALRC](https://www.alrc.gov.au/publication/recognition-of-aboriginal-customary-laws-alrc-report-31/3-aboriginal-societies-the-experience-of-contact/changing-policies-towards-aboriginal-people/))

Students should have a general understanding of some of the specific policies and be able to discuss them in a broad context.

### What is the difference between ‘awareness’ and ‘public views’?

The study design introduces the terms ‘awareness’ and ‘public views’ to support investigating an issue. It aims to distinguish between what is ‘known or understood’ (awareness) and ‘opinions, biases, and stereotypes’ (views).

For example, the publication of ‘Dark Emu’ has impacted public awareness, distinct from any views that may or may not have changed. ‘Awareness’ and ‘Public Views’ might be measured in various ways, including through specific instruments such as surveys and opinion polls.

Unit 3, Area of Study 1 lists four examples of historical suppression of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, but the Key Skill asks students to analyse one. Do students need to know all four or just one?

The preface gives the four as examples (‘some of these policies and practices included…’), but students should consider a range of examples, including the four listed.

The Key Knowledge states, ‘the historical suppression of Australian Indigenous cultures through government policies and Indigenous responses to this suppression,’ indicating they should know of multiple policies and responses.

As noted in the Key Skills, they are expected to be able to draw on examples of suppression and its impacts through multiple policies and analyse the effect of a policy in detail.

Students and teachers are asked whether representations are ‘culturally relative’ or ‘ethnocentric’. To analyse a representation (as required in the Key Skills) as culturally relativist, ethnocentric or both, more profound knowledge of the values and beliefs of the culture(s) being represented is required. How should students approach this in their writing?

Students can nuance their interpretations (e.g., ‘assuming that…’ or ‘depending on… ‘ etc.) to analyse representations using their knowledge gained from their VCE Sociology studies and the Key Knowledge within the Study Design; no additional knowledge should be expected to be used.

Additionally, students are asked to refer to representations that ‘could be interpreted’ in different ways. Students should, therefore, use qualifying language that suggests a range of possibilities, e.g. Could be, Might be, Perhaps, Possibly, It seems, Likely, In some cases, Under certain conditions, Generally, To some extent, Usually, May, Seems to, Not necessarily, One possibility is etc.

Unit 3, Area of Study 2

Does Stuart Hall’s research refer to ‘Ethnic Hybridity’ or ‘Cultural Hybridity’?

Stuart Hall’s research concerns ‘Cultural Hybridity’, and the Sociology Study Design 2024-2028 has been updated to Version 2 to reflect this.

Should students know mainly historical or contemporary examples of how Australian Indigenous Culture has been represented?

Students should know a range of historical and contemporary examples that could be interpreted as culturally relative or ethnocentric.

Generally, contemporary representations are those created within the last ten years.

How does self-identification relate to the concept of ethnicity?

The Study Design states that a particular ethnic group must be studied. Drawing on the notion of a group, the Study Design allows for self-identification of the group (e.g. Pan African), noting this is not the same as self-identification as an individual.

An ethnic group may identify itself through several factors, often interconnected. These include:

* Shared ancestry or lineage: A common historical or genetic heritage that ties members together.
* Cultural practices: Distinct traditions, customs, rituals, and ways of life passed down through generations.
* Language: A common language or dialect spoken or understood by the group, often central to identity.
* Religion or belief systems: Shared religious practices, values, or spiritual beliefs.
* Geographic origins: A connection to a specific region, country, or homeland where the group historically lived or lives.
* Social norms and values: Similar beliefs, ethics, and social behaviours that unify members.
* Shared history or experience: A common past, including significant events or struggles that shape the group's identity.
* Symbols and heritage: Identifiable cultural symbols, such as clothing, art, food, or music.
* Self-identification: The group's sense of identity and how members see themselves and want to be recognised by others.

Ethnic identity can evolve, with members adopting or adapting aspects of their ethnic heritage to contemporary contexts.

The ethnic group selected should differ from the community group chosen for Unit 4 and should be a migrant group.

The Study Design says that ethnicity is different from religion. Does that mean students cannot study a group such as ‘Jewish-Australians’ or ‘Islamic-Australians’?

If a particular group self-identifies and has a ‘shared cultural heritage and way of life’, this would be within the bounds of the study design. It would not be within the bounds of the study to consider only a strict religious grouping, such as ‘Buddhist’, ‘Christian’, ‘Islamic’, or ‘Jewish’.

A group such as ‘Russian-Orthodox’, ‘Ashkenazi Jews ‘, ‘Lebanese-Muslim-Australians’, or ‘Irish-Catholic-Australians’ would be appropriate in this circumstance as religious beliefs are a single aspect, amongst multiple distinct aspects, of their ethnic identity.

How are students expected to compare “Australia’s current ethnic diversity compared with other countries” as stated in the Key Knowledge for Area of Study 2?

As stated in the preamble, this Area of Study focuses on ethnic migrant groups.

Students should use data sets, such as migration numbers, national language(s), religion(s), or other internationally comparable data sets, to enable accurate comparisons between countries.

Unit 4, Area of Study 1

Is it necessary for students to use the German terms ‘Gesellschaft’ and ‘Gemeinschaft’ when discussing Tonnies’ theory or can they use the English terms?

These are concepts used for analytical purposes and, as such, are kept separate from the English words ‘community’ and ‘society’. This enables discussion of how each might be present in a particular community or society and demonstrates student understanding of Tonnies’ theory.

Unit 4, AOS 2

Can organisations be considered a ‘social movement’?

The study design does not refer to organisations but only social movements. Students might begin with organisations when trying to identify a social movement, and a study of the stages of social movements may involve an analysis of any relevant organisations.

Additionally, some social movements may begin to look like organisations as they become more structured during their bureaucratic stage.