

2019 VCE Sociology examination report

General comments

High-scoring responses to the 2019 examination questions carefully addressed command terms, such as compare and evaluate. Lower-scoring responses included definitions of key concepts or theories and some examples but did not answer all aspects of complex questions.

Students are reminded that they need to have an awareness all parts of the VCAA study design. This may have addressed some of the common errors among responses. For example:

- The 'issue' concerning the awareness of Australian Indigenous culture needs to be connected to publicly accessible material produced in the last 10 years.
- A religion, while an important feature of some people's ethnic identity, is not considered to be an ethnic group.
- Students' detailed investigations into a specific social movement need to be explored in the 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	4	Average
%	13	20	50	13	5	1.8

This question required students to explain the difference between practical reconciliation and symbolic reconciliation. Most students provided good examples of each. The most common examples were the apology to the stolen generations (2008) and Closing the Gap government policies.

High-scoring responses explored the differences between the two forms of reconciliation. For example, emotional gestures versus addressing structural inequality. A common error was mistaking the 'Close the Gap' campaign with Closing the Gap government policies.

In order to thoroughly address this question, students needed to:

- demonstrate an understanding of practical reconciliation using an example

- demonstrate an understanding of symbolic reconciliation using an example
- explore the difference between the two forms of reconciliation.

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

In contrast, practical reconciliation aims to initiate public policy to provide a practical, physical form of healing for Indigenous Australians. This differs to symbolic reconciliation as it promotes actual strategies for healing, rather than spoken acknowledgement.

Question 2

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	Average
%	13	10	14	26	20	14	4	2.9

This question required students to discuss how an example of practical or symbolic reconciliation supported or limited public awareness of Australian Indigenous culture.

To receive full marks for this question, students needed to:

- demonstrate an understanding of the type of reconciliation selected
- provide an example of practical or symbolic reconciliation
- demonstrate an understanding of the term ‘awareness’
- explain how the example selected impacted on awareness of Australian Indigenous culture
- use evidence to support their response.

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

One example of how symbolic reconciliation has supported public awareness of Australian Indigenous culture is former Prime Minister Kevin Rudd’s 2008 apology to the stolen generation. ... The apology was a televised speech to the Parliament by the incumbent Prime Minister indicating both the seriousness and sincerity of the gesture to a wide Australian audience, including non-Indigenous Australians. Therefore the speech most likely promoted public awareness.

Question 3

Marks	0	1	2	3	Average
%	4	40	38	18	1.7

Many students answered this question well. They needed to explain the meaning of multiculturalism, as well as show how Australia is a multicultural society. Some responses erroneously described immigration policies.

Students were required to:

- demonstrate an understanding of the concept of multiculturalism
- outline how Australia is a multicultural society. For example:
 - statistical evidence of cultural diversity
 - celebrating and valuing diversity
 - maintaining social cohesion
 - responding to intolerance and discrimination
 - government funding for multicultural events
 - fostering unity and promoting harmony
 - emphasising the economic advantages of living in a multicultural society.

Question 4

Marks	0	1	2	3	Average
%	6	15	47	32	2.1

This question required students to explore the relationship between the concepts of ethnocentrism and the 'other'. Lower-scoring responses provided definitions but did not examine the connection between the two concepts. Students who outlined the cause and effect relationship between the concepts produced higher-scoring responses.

Students were required to:

- demonstrate an understanding of the concept of ethnocentrism
- demonstrate an understanding of the concept of the 'other'
- explain the relationship between the concepts
- accurate responses would have noted that ethnocentric thinking and actions may result in the otherness of ethnic groups.

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

The 'other' is the labelling of an ethnicity as 'outsiders' by the dominant culture due to perceived differences. Hence, 'othering' involves an ethnocentric ideology as it creates a barrier between 'them' and 'us' in the belief that the dominant culture is superior to the 'other' due to its perceived differences.

Question 5

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	24	29	27	15	5	1.5

This question required students to compare Australia's current ethnic diversity with that of another developed country. Many students provided accurate data to support their comparison. However, some students did not engage in a comparison. The word 'whereas' or 'however' in isolation was not sufficient. Clear statements about the nature of the similarities and/or differences in the diversity of the countries were necessary.

To receive full marks for this question, students needed to:

- outline Australia's current ethnic diversity supported by evidence
- outline the ethnic diversity of another developed country supported by evidence
- engage in a comparison.

The following is an example of a possible comparison.

Both Australia and Canada are very ethnically diverse. This is seen through their similar net migration rates of 5.4 migrants per 1000 population in Australia, and 5.7 migrants per 1000 population in Canada (CIA World Factbook 2019).

Despite this similarity there are differences. For example, according to the CIA World Factbook (2019) Canada has two official languages (French and English) reflecting the ethnic groups' shared ancestry, whereas Australia only has one official language, this being English.

Question 6

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	3	14	34	36	13	2.4

This question required students to identify changes to the concept of community as reflected in the experience of the town of Heathcote (in Representation 1).

To receive full marks for this question, students were required to:

- demonstrate an understanding of the concept of community
- demonstrate an understanding of Tönnies' theory of community
- identify change to Heathcote over time
- relate the change in Heathcote to Tönnies' theory.

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

So, while Heathcote would have had strong gemeinschaft features in the gold rush era due to the small population and intimate, location-based bonds, more gesellschaft elements would be interspersed in the present day as the population grows and more members are commuting to and from Melbourne. There would also be a weakened sense of identity as there is a mix of farmers and commuters due to the urbanised, post-industrial world.

Question 7

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	Average
%	6	7	22	30	20	11	4	3.0

This question required students to explain the impact of economic and geographical change on the experience of community in Heathcote. Most students were able to describe specific examples of change. Fewer students linked these changes to the potential impact on the experience of community.

To receive full marks for this question, students needed to:

- demonstrate an understanding of 'experience of community'
- identify and explain one economic change, and then link this change to the experience of community for Heathcote
- identify and explain one geographical change, and then link this change to the experience of community for Heathcote
- use examples from the representation to support their response.

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

One geographical characteristic that may have affected the experience of community in Heathcote is the main street, including the "supermarket that had to be expanded". This may have created a positive experience of community, as members had an area they could all socialise and feel included and welcome.

Question 8

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	13	21	31	23	12	2.0

This question required students to explain why the social movement referenced in Representation 1 and 2 emerged. Most students accurately described new social movement theory. Fewer responses made links between the theory and the emergence of the social movement 'Justice for Captives'.

To receive full marks for this question, students needed to:

- demonstrate an understanding of new social movement theory
- identify the purpose (reason for emerging) of the social movement 'Justice for Captives'
- explain and connect characteristics of new social movement theory to 'Justice for Captives'
- use appropriate evidence from the representation material to support the response.

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

Justice for Captives emergence can be explained by New Social Movement theory, being a defensive movement that aims to protect animals from corporations such as Sea World. The theory points to social movements allowing for social 'justice' on behalf of those unable to demand change, such as the animals at sea world.

Question 9

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	Average
%	7	10	20	26	24	10	4	2.9

This question required students to analyse how power was used by the social movement 'Justice for Captives' and their opposition. Most students were able to identify examples of the use of power. Higher-scoring responses correctly linked examples of power to Max Weber's definition and commented on the effectiveness of methods used by the social movement and their opposition.

To receive full marks for this question, students needed to:

- demonstrate an understanding of power according to Max Weber (Weber claimed that every society is based on power, which he defined as the ability to achieve desired ends despite resistance from others)
- identify and explain the use of power by 'Justice for Captives', in terms of achieving their desired ends
- identify and explain the use of power by the opposition (Sea World), in terms of achieving their desired ends
- use appropriate evidence from the representation material to support the response.

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

The Justice for Captives social movement use power of the media from their Facebook page to spread the message "DON'T BUY A TICKET" (Representation 2) with a bear and a dolphin beside the message to imbue empathy from the public that these animals are "held captive and exploited"[ed], in order to gain support to stop this harsh treatment, hence trying to "achieve desired ends, respite resistance".

Section B

Question 1

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Average
%	30	11	14	15	13	7	4	2	2	1	0	2.4

This question required students to discuss the effectiveness of one Australian Indigenous response to a recent issue. Examples of issues explored well by students were the 'Change the Date' Australia Day campaign, Constitutional recognition and racism in sport. Examples that were problematic included the well-supported Close the Gap campaign and historical issues, such as campaigning related to the 1967 referendum.

Some issues presented were lacking contextual information. For example, a reference to 'treaty' in isolation was not sufficient. Students who referred to the specific state or territory they had studied in relation to this issue produced higher-scoring responses.

Students were required to:

- provide a description of the nature of the issue that has the potential to change awareness of Australian Indigenous culture
- describe an Australian Indigenous response to the issue

- comment on the effectiveness of the response in changing awareness of Australian Indigenous culture
- show an understanding of the term awareness
- use detailed evidence to support their response.

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

In 2015, a convention was held at Uluru where 250 delegates from a diverse background of Indigenous culture met and discussed what recognition should be ... the highly televised nature of the event could have increased awareness for otherwise indifferent non-Indigenous Australians ... However, awareness has been limited because virtually none of the requests made from the Uluru Statement of the Heart have been executed.

Question 2

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Average
%	11	7	12	24	24	10	6	3	2	1	0	3.4

This question required students to analyse the experience of inclusion and belonging for members within an ethnic group. High-scoring responses drew upon the range of barriers and enablers studied throughout the year, including customs and traditions, social attitudes, media and political factors.

Students were required to:

- provide an overview of the ethnic group studied
- outline the nature of inclusion and belonging for group members
- provide specific examples of factors that may lead to feelings of inclusion and belonging within the ethnic group studied
- analyse how or why these factors led to the positive or negative experiences of inclusion and belonging
- show an understanding of the concepts of inclusion and belonging
- use detailed evidence to support their response.

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

An ethnic group studied this year was Sri Lankan Australians ... There are many temples in Australia where Sri Lankans can continue to practice their culture and feel included in society. One participant stated that "we receive a lot of grants, and have many places to go practice our religion, as well as Sri Lankan TV, newspapers and radio, which makes me feel included as I can still be Sri Lankan in Australia."

Question 3

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Average
%	5	9	14	26	30	8	5	2	1	0	0	3.3

This question required students to explain the nature of a community studied throughout the year. Higher-scoring responses elaborated upon a range of characteristics to help justify why the group was considered a community. Higher-scoring responses drew upon evidence from a range of primary and secondary sources, rather than a single documentary or textbook example.

Students needed to:

- demonstrate an understanding of the concept of community
- provide an overview of one specific community
- provide appropriate reasons as to why the group could be classified as a community
- use detailed evidence to support their response.

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

One community studied this year is the Maroons Netball Club ... According to the Maroon's netball club's website, most players "attend the same primary school", and all "live locally to the club". The players are in regular contact with each other at training and games. Due to their close proximity, they are also able to connect outside of netball at school or on the weekends ... Members of the Club also have a shared interest in netball.

Question 4

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Average
%	15	8	12	20	17	13	7	5	2	1	0	3.3

This question required students to evaluate the ability of a specific social movement to influence social change. High-scoring responses clearly expressed both 'what' and 'who' was changed by the movement. In addition, students who engaged in an evaluation rather than just describing the key features of a movement produced higher-scoring responses.

Students' responses needed to:

- provide an overview of the social movement
- demonstrate an understanding of the concept of social change
- describe the actions intended to influence social change
- provide evidence to demonstrate actions and the degree of change achieved by the social movement
- evaluate the effectiveness of the actions, linked to the degree of change and the ability or success of the social movement to achieve its goals.

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

One social movement studied is the 'Ban Live Exports' movement, advocated for by 'Animals Australia'. ... Overall, the Ban Live Exports movement has positively influenced social change. Despite effectively changing the public's views, it still has a long way to go to achieve legislative change that would ban live exports.