# Next Generation Higher National Unit Specification

## Sociology B: Applied Sociology (SCQF level 7)

**Unit code:** J6EX 47

**SCQF level:** 7 (16 SCQF credit points)

**Valid from:** session 2024–25

## Prototype unit specification for use in pilot delivery only (version 3.0) August 2024

This unit specification provides detailed information about the unit to ensure consistent and transparent assessment year on year.

This unit specification is for teachers and lecturers and contains all the mandatory information required to deliver and assess the unit.

# Unit purpose

This unit builds on learners' knowledge and understanding of the development of sociology, sociological thinking and concepts from Sociology A: The Sociological Imagination at SCQF level 7. The unit develops learners' skills in analysing and evaluating sociological perspectives and related theories, and applying these skills to a selected range of sociological themes. The unit also develops skills in critical and reflective thinking. Learners build an understanding of social diversity and can explain the significance of social structure and social action in understanding society and social issues. You should encourage learners to develop their own sociological understanding through active engagement with the contemporary social world and Scottish society.

The unit is aimed at those who have previous knowledge or experience of sociology; for example, Sociology A: The Sociological Imagination at SCQF level 7.

Learners normally study the unit as part of HNC Social Sciences. They can also study it on a stand-alone basis.

# Unit outcomes

Learners who complete this unit can:

1  apply key contributions of sociological perspectives and evidence to different sociological themes
2  evaluate key contributions of sociological perspectives and evidence to different sociological themes

## Evidence requirements

Learners should provide written or oral evidence covering all unit outcomes. Learners must produce this evidence under open-book conditions. You should give learners the task at an appropriate point of delivering the unit. Learners should submit their work for marking on a date that you have provided or agreed with them.

Learners must produce a written response of between 1,500 and 2,000 words, or an oral response that is 12 to 15 minutes in duration.

Learners' responses must include:

♦  an explanation of three perspectives, and one theory or source of evidence for each perspective related to one theme
♦  identification and explanation of the similarities and differences between these perspectives
♦  a holistic evaluation covering the perspectives and evidence of their contribution to one of the themes

You can choose to use a mix of methods across a cohort, depending on what is most suitable for each learner; for example, some could give a written response, others could give an oral response and others could respond in the form of a blog.

Learners must fully reference their assessment, using reliable sources appropriate for SCQF level 7. They must list their sources in a bibliography or reference list, in a recognised standard format such as Harvard or APA.

The SCQF level of the unit provides additional context relating to the quality of evidence. Learners should:

♦ contribute information that is complex, accurate and relevant to its purpose and audience
♦ present ideas clearly and coherently
♦ use a structure that is appropriate to the purpose
♦ provide supporting evidence or references

# Knowledge and skills

The following table shows the knowledge and skills covered by the unit outcomes:

| Knowledge | Skills |
|---|---|
| **Outcome 1**<br>Learners should understand:<br><br>♦ what the key sociological perspectives are<br>♦ key contributions of sociological perspectives<br>♦ different sociological themes<br>♦ the relationship between individuals, groups, institutions and societies<br>♦ the development of sociological theories and concepts in understanding sociological themes | **Outcome 1**<br>Learners can:<br><br>♦ apply key contributions of sociological theories and evidence to different sociological themes |
| **Outcome 2**<br>Learners should understand:<br><br>♦ what evidence can be used to support or refute theories or perspectives<br>♦ how to critically evaluate theories and evidence in a holistic way | **Outcome 2**<br>Learners can:<br><br>♦ analyse critically the nature and sources of information<br>♦ form rational judgements and arguments based on evidence<br>♦ present information in an organised way to substantiate judgements made |

# Meta-skills

Throughout this unit, learners develop meta-skills to enhance their employability in the social sciences sector.

The unit helps learners to develop the meta-skills of self-management, social intelligence and innovation meta-skills. Learners should develop meta-skills naturally as you deliver the unit. You should encourage learners to develop a minimum of one area in each of the three categories, but they do not need to cover all suggested subsections. The following suggestions may help shape delivery and assessment, and vary depending on the chosen topics and assessment method.

## Self-management

This meta-skill includes:

♦ focusing: managing time; producing work to clear deadlines
♦ integrity: acting in an ethical way when producing assessments and carrying out project work
♦ adapting: learning new ideas and concepts; using different digital technologies and means of communication; reflecting on their performance to improve their approach
♦ initiative: developing their own ideas and areas of enquiry; making informed decisions about which aspects to study and suitable theories and evidence; gathering information

## Social intelligence

This meta-skill includes:

♦ communicating: using interpersonal skills, including empathy, during discussions; justifying choices; demonstrating understanding in assessment responses; sharing ideas and opinions
♦ feeling: demonstrating self and social awareness; showing empathy in discussions and work submissions; respecting other learners' opinions
♦ collaborating: working with other learners, for example on formative presentations and project work; taking account of others in planning and carrying out tasks
♦ leading: taking account of others; sharing information

## Innovation

This meta-skill includes:

♦ curiosity: gathering and sourcing information; participating in discussion and debates; questioning assumptions, ideas, information and research evidence
♦ sense-making: participating in discussion to understand why people behave as they do; synthesising a range of ideas and evidence; evaluating ideas and evidence
♦ critical thinking: making logical connections and reasoned judgements; evaluating and comparing research evidence

There are other meta-skills that learners could develop, depending on the learning and teaching activities you carry out, including:

♦ innovation: creativity

# Literacies

Learners develop core skills in the following literacies:

## Communication

Learners develop communication skills throughout the unit, as there is opportunity for discussion, review of written sources and production of plans during both formative and summative work. You can use a variety of communication technologies, including presentation software. Learners need to communicate orally and in writing at various stages of the unit.

## Digital

Learners develop digital skills during the unit. There are opportunities to use the internet to research themes and subthemes, use presentation software, word process assessment responses. Using a VLE also supports digital skills.

# Learning for Sustainability

Learning for Sustainability aims to build the values, attitudes, knowledge, skills and confidence needed to develop practices and make decisions that are compatible with a sustainable and equitable society. In this unit, there are opportunities to develop knowledge and understanding of social sustainability while studying themes such as social class, race and ethnicity, poverty and social exclusion, health and medicine, and crime and deviance, linking to the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

The unit fits with the following sustainable development goals:

1   No poverty: through the themes of structure and institutions, and social divisions.
3   Good health and well-being: through exploring how social structures lead to social change.
5   Decent work and economic growth: through the theme of structure and institution, particularly in the area of work and political economy.
10 Reduced inequalities: through the theme of social divisions.
12 Peace, justice and strong institutions: through the theme of crime, deviance and behaviour.

# Delivery of unit

This unit is in the 'named social sciences' section of HNC Social Sciences. You can deliver it as part of the group award or as a stand-alone unit.

It is one of two units that cover sociology in HNC Social Sciences. The unit is best delivered following Sociology A: The Sociological Imagination at SCQF level 7, which covers the foundations of sociology.

The overall unit delivery time is a notional 80 hours of contact time for delivery and assessment, and we expect learners to commit a further 80 hours of self-directed study.

The amount of time you allocate to each outcome is at your centre's discretion, however, you should consider both outcomes together as you deliver the unit. We suggest you spend 25 hours on each theme to structure the learning and teaching activities.

# Additional guidance

The guidance in this section is not mandatory.

## Content and context for this unit

The aim of this unit is to apply sociological perspectives, and related theories and evidence, and demonstrate their relevance to different sociological themes, including sub-themes and intersections. You should introduce learners to three different themes and their sociological perspectives, and related theories and evidence. This enables learners to acquire knowledge and a critical understanding of contemporary social processes and social changes. In terms of assessment, learners are only required to provide evidence for one theme.

You can draw perspectives from 'classical' sociology, such as functionalism, Marxism, Weberian, and social action theories such as symbolic interactionism; or from contemporary sociology such as postmodernism, cultural studies, post-structuralism and feminism.

The time you allocate to each theme can vary, depending on your knowledge and preference. However, given the outcomes and evidence required, you should fully develop at least three themes during the learning and teaching time.

The unit aims to offer learners and centres as much flexibility as possible in terms of sociological themes, debates and related social themes. Applying perspectives and analysing and evaluating theories and evidence in relation to the themes provides significant scope for the development and consolidation of sociological understanding.

We have provided a list of themes below, aiming to provide as much choice and flexibility as possible. Within these themes there is scope to demonstrate intersections and various sub-themes. For example, inequality can intersect social class, gender, crime and mass media. Choices can reflect individual interests and specialisms, and can also satisfy the requirements of articulated routes to higher education.

You should cover three themes in a notional 80 hours, giving centres approximately 25 hours per topic. This includes learning and teaching, and assessment, as well as activities that support meta-skills development.

Our suggested sociological themes, within which you can explore sub-themes and intersections, are:

♦ Structures and institutions
    — family
    — education
    — media
    — work
    — political economy

- Social divisions and identity:
  - class
  - race
  - ethnicity
  - gender
  - sexuality

- Crime and deviance, and behaviour:
  - rules
  - laws
  - deviance
  - crime
  - behaviour and consumption

We do not expect you to cover each theme in its entirety, and subsections or a focus on sub-themes or intersections between themes is acceptable if coverage is extensive and substantive enough for assessment purposes. You could apply a Scottish perspective to any of the themes where appropriate.

## Approaches to delivery

You should structure the learning and teaching programme to allow time for the development of meta-skills, and academic and other transferable skills. You should also allow for assessment practice within the hours suggested.

Learners can benefit from a varied and active learning approach, where learners engage in supported, independent and collaborative learning. You should encourage learners to take a participative and practical approach. Delivery methods you could use include:

- demonstration
- debate
- individual and group research tasks
- presenting findings
- a virtual learning environment (VLE)
- digital tools and social media
- film and visual images
- close reading of sources

Unit delivery is flexible, so you can deliver it in the way that best suits your expertise, learners' needs and time constraints.

You can shape delivery and assessment to support learners to develop their academic skills such as time management, multi-tasking ability, digital skills, essay writing skills and questioning ability. You can design formative and summative activities and assessments that encourage learners to practise the skills that they need to progress to the next level of study.

You should encourage a questioning approach at all times, as it leads learners to think like social scientists and be analytical and enquiring, rather than passively accepting facts. This empowers learners by building on essential, transferable skills.

## Approaches to assessment

For both outcomes, you must teach at least three key perspectives, and at least three related theories and sources of evidence that either support or refute the arguments raised by these perspectives, in each of the three themes. However, you assess only one theme and use one example of theory and sources of evidence for each perspective. There is likely to be some intersection of themes; for example, gender and crime may intersect with social class and inequalities.

Evidence learners use to support claims or arguments made in sociology should come from a range of sources — primary and secondary, and qualitative and quantitative. Learners are not limited to 'empirical evidence' in a narrow methodological sense. The skill should be about introducing sources of evidence to support or challenge arguments, perspectives, points of view, and other findings or sources. For example, documentary evidence, public inquiries and social policy help develop learners' skills in terms of critical thinking and writing. Sources of evidence can also include specific studies.

Relevant evidence is any acceptable, related and academically appropriate sociological or social scientific writing or communication. Learners should use evidence to support or refute each of the main theories discussed, though they may also want to introduce further evidence to support or refute any additional perspectives that they include. Effectively applying the perspectives to the social themes and the evidence to support or refute each of the theories demonstrates that learners have understood both the topics and the theoretical approaches to the topics.

We recommend that you assess the unit holistically, as that is best to reduce the learners' assessment burden. You can decide to use a portfolio approach with two or more assessment tasks issued at different times in the unit delivery, if that is better for your learners.

You should design an appropriate assessment based on a method that allows learners to meet the evidence requirements. This can be written or oral, depending on the needs of learners and your centre. If learners choose an oral method, we recommend that you record this in some form or provide assessor notes on the presentation for external verification purposes. Learners must show evidence of meeting all evidence requirements. Ideally, they would complete oral presentations or poster exhibitions individually. If a group presentation is used, individual learners must show coverage of all evidence requirements. To do this, they may need to provide additional responses to structured questions or an essay. Learners should submit their work for marking on a date that you have provided or agreed with them. Learners can collaborate with you to devise their own focus of study. This could be in the form of an essay, presentation or poster. It should be a substantive piece of work that allows learners to respond in non-prescriptive ways to develop and demonstrate their 'sociological imagination' through their commentary on sociological perspectives and evidence.

Assessment methods should encourage learners to discuss the themes in the context of contrasting sociological perspectives. Learners have some flexibility in determining the perspectives and area of focus within the theme. In terms of meta-skills and analysis and evaluation, learners could introduce and source additional theories and evidence.

It is possible to combine a poster exhibition with an oral presentation. For example, a learner could produce a detailed poster of sociological themes such as structures and institutions, with subthemes, such as family or education, and cover the sociological perspectives, related theories and evidence in an oral presentation using presentation software or a mind map as a visual aid. In this case, the time across both outcomes and all evidence requirements would be 12 to 15 minutes in total. So, the learner would spend 12 to 15 minutes on the poster exhibition and the oral presentation together, not 12 to 15 minutes on each. They should also be done on the same occasion.

Whichever method learners choose, they must be able to access notes, textbooks and other materials, as it is an open-book assessment.

You should make learners aware of the importance of good judgement in selecting appropriate academic sources. You should encourage them to choose academic sources rather than generic search engines, to enable them to be more confident of information and better equipped to progress to SCQF level 8 units.

If you are using a blog or creation of a website as the way of gathering evidence, it should not be in the public domain. Rather, it should be on an intranet or private area of your VLE to reduce the likelihood of plagiarism.

Authenticating learners' work is essential. It would be helpful to collect notes or visual presentation materials from learners as further evidence of meeting SCQF level 7 in the presentation. You should monitor learners' progress throughout to authenticate submitted work. Where possible, you should use plagiarism detection software.

Regardless of the assessment method chosen, learners must submit a bibliography citing appropriate sources, presented in a standard referencing format such as Harvard or APA.

It is important that learners' responses to the assessment are at SCQF level 7.

## Opportunities for e-assessment

Assessment that is supported by information and communication technology (ICT), such as e-testing or the use of e-portfolios or social software, may be appropriate for some assessments in this unit.

If your centre wants to use e-assessment, you must ensure that you apply the national standard to all evidence and that conditions of assessment (as specified in the evidence requirements) are met, regardless of the mode of gathering evidence.

# Equality and inclusion

This unit is designed to be as fair and as accessible as possible with no unnecessary barriers to learning or assessment.

You should take into account the needs of individual learners when planning learning experiences, selecting assessment methods or considering alternative evidence.

Guidance on assessment arrangements for disabled learners and/or those with additional support needs is available on the assessment arrangements web page: [www.sqa.org.uk/assessmentarrangements](http://www.sqa.org.uk/assessmentarrangements).

# Information for learners

## Sociology B: Applied Sociology (SCQF level 7)

This information explains:

♦   what the unit is about

♦   what you should know or be able to do before you start

♦   what you need to do during the unit

♦   opportunities for further learning and employment


## Unit information

This unit develops your understanding of contemporary society by applying sociological perspectives and related theories and concepts to several sociological themes (societal issues and problems). It builds on your sociological imagination and understanding from Sociology A: The Sociological Imagination at SCQF level 7.

You should have good communication skills and an interest in sociology. It would also be helpful to have some basic digital skills.

You are encouraged to develop an enquiring and critical mind throughout the study of the unit. It would be useful for you to think about ideas such as:

♦   How have the sociological perspectives developed over time?

♦   What contribution have they made to understanding the relationship between the individual and society?

♦   How does the application of sociological perspectives help us develop an understanding of the role of structure and institutions in society and the relationship between those structures and society?

♦   To what extent and why does identity, status and environment determine the life chances of individuals and groups?

On completing the unit, you can:

1   apply key contributions of sociological perspectives and evidence to different sociological themes

2   evaluate key contributions of sociological perspectives and evidence to different sociological themes

At the end of the unit, you carry out an assessment that focuses on explaining the foundations of sociology, and applying key sociological concepts and features from different sociological theories to analyse the relationship between the individual and society. This is all done around a sociological theme or intersection of themes.

You are assessed using an open-book assessment covering both outcomes. This means that you have access to materials such as textbooks, notes and your virtual learning

environment (VLE). You can give your assessment response in writing or orally. If your assessment response is written, it must be approximately 1,500 to 2,000 words, and if it is oral, it must be 12 to 15 minutes long.

During the unit, you develop academic skills such as time management, multi-tasking ability, digital skills, essay writing skills and questioning ability.

You also develop key literacies such as communication, developed in formative and summative assessment. You learn to convey complex ideas in a well-structured and coherent way, with references where appropriate. Oral presentations and discussions may also be used to help you improve your communication skills. You develop digital skills and computer literacy by using digital packages to produce assessments, and internet sources to research information on theorists, sociological concepts and other sociological ideas.

During the unit, you are introduced to Learning for Sustainability ideas, with links made to the UN Sustainable Development Goals, particularly while studying social class, race and ethnicity, poverty and social exclusion, health and medicine, and crime and deviance.

The unit can support learning in other related units, such as Sociology A: The Sociological Imagination at SCQF level 7. You may be able to study HND Social Sciences or a degree programme in a related subject if you study the unit as part of the HNC Social Sciences.

## Meta-skills

Throughout this unit, you develop meta-skills to enhance your employability in the social sciences sector.

Meta-skills include self-management, social intelligence and innovation.

You develop these naturally as you take part in the range of learning and teaching activities and produce assessment responses. Improving meta-skills such as organising your time (self-management) and communicating ideas clearly (social intelligence) is useful for future study and employment, as well as during the unit.

# Administrative information

**Published:**   August 2024 (version 3.0)

**Superclass:**  EE

## History of changes

| Version | Description of change | Date |
|---------|----------------------|------|
| 2.0 | ♦ In 'Evidence requirements', some wording was changed and some paragraphs deleted for clarity.<br>♦ In 'Knowledge and skills', the last 'knowledge' bullet point for outcome 1 was deleted, as it is not required.<br>♦ In 'Approaches to assessment', additional information allowing group presentations was added.<br>♦ In 'Approaches to assessment', the examples used in the paragraph on posters were changed to remove errors.<br>♦ Rewording or additional sentences to standardise statements across HNC Social Sciences units in 'Evidence requirements', 'Meta-skills', 'Literacies' and 'Information for learners'. | June 2023 |
| 3.0 | ♦ Removed reference to the requirements to use holistic assessment in 'Evidence Requirements and in 'Information for learners'.<br>♦ In 'Approaches to assessment', additional words that a holistic or a portfolio approach can be used. | April 2024 |
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