



GENERAL COMMENTS

Students' responses to the 2007 Sociology examination included a range of contemporary issues, such as the former Federal government's intervention in indigenous communities in the Northern Territory, the impact of water restrictions, the role of the community and government in response to environmental harm and the ongoing fear of terrorism. Students who paid attention to the meanings of key instructional terms, defined key concepts and supported their responses with evidence performed well.

SPECIFIC INFORMATION

Note: Student responses reproduced herein have not been corrected for grammar, spelling or factual information.

Section A

In comparison to 2006, it was noted that students in 2007 were better at differentiating between the requirements of Question 1, which asked about the 'concept' of community, and Question 2, which asked students to explain the 'experience of community'.

Question 1

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Average
%	3	2	6	7	15	17	16	12	11	7	5	5.5

This question required students to identify and describe two economic, political or social factors that had shaped the experience Australians have of community. In order to fully answer the question students should have:

- defined community, or provided a detailed description of the key features of group(s)
- identified and described two 'factors'; for example:
 - economic – work, globalisation
 - political – government policies such as immigration, multiculturalism
 - social – urbanisation, family, new styles and modes of communication, work-family balance
- elaborated on **how** the factors have shaped the experience of community.

Following is an example of a good response.

Australian traditional communities ... [are] a group of people living in the same area, who share regular contact with one another. Traditional communities tend to be quite small, and homogenous as well as quite exclusive with membership. An example of a traditional community would be Greenwood Manor Elderly Village, all members [are] of the same ethnicity and age, and all members live in Dingley Village.

Due to social factors, such as the increase of communication due to advances in technology and transport, such as the internet, mobile phones and airplanes; Australians have begun to see communities differently. The internet has allowed for email and chat rooms to become available for communication among members ... This has resulted in larger communities, with more members due to the ... communication process; as well as resulting in communities not being location based; but interest based, with membership over vast distances and in some communities members are situated all over the world.

... Political policies such as the Federal government policy of multiculturalism have also changed the view Australians have of community. This policy ... has allowed Australians to become much more tolerant and welcoming to people of other cultures and nationalities. Due to this increase of cultural acceptance, communities in Australia have become much less exclusive and more heterogeneous, with a wide variety of members taking part...

Due to both of these factors – increased communication and multiculturalism, the Australian traditional community has become less common in Australia, and a modern community has been created. The modern community is large, interest based, with a variety of different members. Almost anyone is welcome to join these communities, as they are much less exclusive than the traditional community. An example of a modern community is MySpace, an online community which has millions of members located all over the world. Anybody with access to the internet can join, and all members come together with a common interest of keeping in touch or meeting new people.

Question 2

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Average
%	4	4	7	8	11	15	17	10	12	6	6	5.4

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Students were required to identify two issues and examine how they impact on a community. In doing so, they were required to refer to specific government policy, the environment or economic factors. In order to thoroughly answer the question students needed to:

- provide a thorough description of a community (as opposed to referring to multiple groups)
- identify two issues, providing specific detail about government policy and the economic or environmental impact
- provide evidence relating to before and after the implementation of the factors on the community.

Examples of appropriate factors included:

- government policy – funding of groups; parking/health/noise restrictions; outsourcing; former Immigration Minister Kevin Andrew's comments about the Sudanese community
- environmental – the effect of water restrictions on sporting clubs; the impact of the drought on farming communities.
- economic – fundraising or lack of resources; receiving/losing government grants; the impact of increased membership fees.

The following examples are parts of responses which effectively examined how government policy impacted on community.

Example 1

The Sandringham athletics club is an interest based community which encourages the participation of its members in athletics ... the recent drought has had large negative impacts on the ... club. Due to Stage 3a water restrictions implemented by the Victorian State government, Sandringham's grass warm up track has decayed and can no longer be used. The lack of water has destroyed the surface making it unsuitable to run on. The absence of a warm-up track has forced athletes to warm up on the main rubber track which has overcrowded the track ... The main track ... is in real need of repair. Athletes training sessions have also increased due to the need to share the track. The requirement for additional maintenance has put financial strain on the club...

Due to the rise in membership fees the Sandringham Athletics club has been able to make its track and club rooms wheelchair accessible prompting additional funding from Athletics Victoria. The additional funding and income has allowed Sandringham to maintain its main track despite the increased use. The added facilities has also increased membership from many handicapped athletes whose membership fees have put the club in a stronger ... financial position. The growth in membership has also benefitted the club socially as the increase in numbers has prompted the club to put on more functions such as presentation nights.

Example 2

Government policies that have affected Brighton Soccer Club community include a policy implemented by the Bayside local council. The local Brighton residents lodged an official complaint ... which stated that the high beam lights were affecting the local resident's children as they could not sleep. The local council then implemented the law of turning off the lights after 8.00pm. This impacted on the experience of the Brighton Soccer club as trainings had to be cut short and some older teams had to give up one of their training sessions due to the demand on the fields by other teams. It made it increasingly hard for teams to train in the winter, and affected the experience of community.

Section B

This section of the examination related to Area of Study 2 – Australian Cultural Communities. It required students to demonstrate their understanding of the inequality experienced by indigenous Australians. This experience is notably inconsistent with Australia's perception of Australian society as being both inclusive and egalitarian.

Question 3a.

Marks	0	1	2	Average
%	1	21	78	1.8

This question required students to identify two issues which suggested that indigenous Australians continue to experience inequality. The students needed to state two issues and use evidence from the representation to support their response. Examples of evidence from the representation included:

- text – 'social disadvantage and Aboriginal health'; 'premature death and elevated morbidity rates affect indigenous people more than non-indigenous Australians, while indigenous people have poorer numeracy and literacy abilities than non-indigenous'
- image – crying baby/contented baby; cloth/disposable nappies; babies lying in different directions; colour of babies' skin.

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Question 3b.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	2	6	22	40	29	2.9

Students were required to either agree or disagree with the statement that 'lack of political will is one possible explanation of the slow progress in achieving equality for indigenous people'. High-scoring students:

- presented a clear agree/disagree position statement
- explained the notion of a 'political will'. This could have been from either an indigenous or government policy perspective. They could have referred to action or inaction, and explored who has power or experiences inequity
- supported their position with evidence from either the representation or external evidence.

Following is an excerpt from a good response.

Reconciliation refers to a process of healing and recognition of the mistreatment of indigenous Australians. Reconciliation is vital in achieving equality for Indigenous Australians as many issues like drug and alcohol abuse stem from years of dispossession and a lack of recognition ... Since the referendum in 1967, that began the recent reconciliation process, the Government has been unwilling to progress with symbolic measures like a treaty or a formal apology, focusing more on practical solutions like mutual obligation and financial support. However, without a combination of symbolic and practical reconciliation, as well as consultation with Indigenous communities, equality will not be reached. There needs to be political will to achieve reconciliation before equality is possible.

Question 3c.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	11	18	27	25	19	2.2

Students were required to explain what the representation suggested about the role of economic growth in reducing social or economic inequalities between indigenous and non-indigenous Australians. Many students found this question challenging. Those who were successful:

- provided an explanation of the interconnection between social and economic inequality
- explained the role of 'economic growth' in reducing social or economic disadvantage
- used evidence from the representation to support their response.

Following is an example of a good response.

Economic growth is reducing economic inequalities between indigenous and non indigenous Australians. As economic growth is increasing, it is allowing the Australian government to reduce inequalities ... for example addressing health disadvantages and education disadvantages. Addressing these issues and providing funding means that indigenous Australians can get an education ... [the Federal government can also] address health issues, [which] means Indigenous Australians can receive a better quality life and the 17 year gap will be reduced.

Question 3d.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Average
%	6	6	10	11	13	17	13	10	8	4	2	4.6

This question required students to define multiculturalism and, in doing so, to refer to at least two key features of the policy. For example, that it is a Federal government policy; the date of implementation; and/or it is part of a mutual agreement between government and various cultural communities. In addition, students were required to:

- explore the notion that the indigenous population are often not viewed as part of Australia's multicultural identity
- comment on the ongoing social disadvantage of indigenous Australians, as an indicator that Australia is not inclusive and equitable, or could improve
- evaluate the effectiveness of the policy with reference to the representation and external evidence.

Following is an excerpt from a good response.

Multiculturalism is a Federal Government policy promoting cultural diversity and acceptance. It encourages people to maintain their own languages, beliefs and cultural practices.

The continuing social disadvantage for Indigenous Australians suggest that multiculturalism has not been a tool for success because Indigenous Australians still experience social disadvantages. Indigenous Australians were not counted as citizens until the 1967 referendum. This meant Indigenous Australians didn't feel a part of the social life of Australia. Indigenous Australians



have lower life-expectancy ... ATSI (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders) could only get access to their spiritual land due to the MABO case of 1992, [which] meant that Indigenous people lost their social [and] spiritual connections with their land. Indigenous peoples experience inequalities ... due to the loss of social connections with their families, loss of cultural identity due to the stolen generation. There was no multiculturalism policy during the time of the stolen generation, the Australian government causing detrimental affects to the stolen generation. ATSI still experience traumatic flash backs, lower literacy rates, loss of connection with the earth.

...The fact that the assimilation policy was prevalent which required Aboriginals not of full blood to be absorbed into the wider population ... Aboriginals lost their identity, families and cultural practices. Reconciliation is still not achieved. This also could be the reason why Aboriginals do not want to be part of the Australian culture. Aboriginals may feel by adopting Australia's practices it is taking away their identity.

Section C

This section of the examination related to Unit 4, Area of Study 1 – Citizenship and required students to demonstrate their knowledge of how factors such as age, ethnicity and gender impact upon the experience of citizenship.

Question 4a.

Marks	0	1	2	Average
%	2	27	71	1.7

Students were required to specify the citizenship right explored within the representation, specifically the right of **young people** to vote and their engagement in the democratic process. In order to receive full marks, students needed to make specific reference to the representation, such as referring to the fact that 'young voters would be disadvantaged by new laws that close the electoral rolls on the day an election is officially called'.

Question 4b.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	2	7	23	30	38	3.0

Students were required to list two additional rights and responsibilities that are afforded to Australian citizens. In order to receive full marks, students needed to use examples that are formally documented, such as in the *Australian Citizenship Act 1948*. Appropriate examples included:

- rights – run for parliament; enrol in the defence force; provision of consular assistance; passport; sit on a jury; freedom of speech and movement; education; a fair trial; health care
- responsibilities – pay tax; abide by the law; serve in the armed forces if called to do so.

Question 4c.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	4	7	24	35	29	2.8

This question required students to specify whether they believed that young people had received adequate encouragement to participate in the democratic process. Students who did well presented a clear position and then justified their response with evidence from both the representation and external material.

Following are examples of appropriate arguments.

- Yes – media advertising; promotion to Year 12 students at schools; SMS enrolments; visiting the Liberal member for Kooyong; political leaders using MySpace/Facebook; receiving a letter from the government when they turn 18.
- No – students slow to act; have to be aware of SMS option to participate; symbolism in advertising as opposed to providing the specific steps to participate; low level of interest and engagement with government advertising; laws being changed undermining rights; no pitch from parties specifically to young people; having to be 18 years to vote.

Question 4d.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Average
%	6	4	8	7	13	15	15	14	9	6	3	5.1

This question required students to reflect upon the connection between human rights and citizenship rights within Australian society. Many students found this question challenging. Those who performed well:

- defined human rights and citizenship
- explored the relationship between human rights and citizenship, and specified whether this interconnection is positive or negative

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- explained the experiences of the groups examined
- discussed only two factors
- referred to external evidence to support their discussion.

Many good examples were presented, including:

- yes, it does strengthen Australian citizenship – it reinforces equality in regard to women’s/sexuality based rights
- no, it weakens Australian citizenship – via the erosion of national sovereignty and erosion of traditional (Anglo) rights.

Following is an excerpt from a strong response.

Australian citizenship is seen as a contract between the individual and the state. Citizenship refers to the rights, responsibilities and privileges citizens enjoy. Human rights are fundamental rights which citizens enjoy.

Women have experienced inequality due to sex discrimination, lower wages, a male dominated work force, no maternity leave. However, women’s situations have improved due to laws which have strengthened Australian citizenship. The implementation of the 1984 Sex Discrimination Act meant that women could not be discriminated against ... this made women’s experience of citizenship stronger. The fact that women ... can experience the right to vote has improved their experience of citizenship. Women [were] previously ... not allowed to vote. This right ... meant women felt more accepted and valued in society. Also the fact women were awarded ‘equal pay for equal work’ due to the Sex Discrimination Act meant that women were more motivated to work and choose a career. Before this policy women only received 50% of men’s wages, then 75% ... The fact that women were also awarded 52 weeks maternity leave and entitled to their job back was a huge step forward in their experiences of citizenship.

Similarly, Indigenous people in Australia do not receive the full benefits ... in particular the social rights of health and security. Indigenous Australians have a life expectancy 17 years lower than other Australians, approximately 46% of Indigenous Australians are unemployed and health and living standards are close to that in many developing countries.

Section D

Question chosen	None	a.	b.	c.
%	2	34	60	4

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	Average
%	3	2	2	1	3	2	3	3	4	6	10	9	10	8	12	8	3	4	3	3	1	11.1

Question 5

The responses to the short essay section of the examination paper have significantly improved. Students adhered to the essay format and gave detailed, structured responses that presented a clear contention. However, they need to continue to improve on supporting their position with relevant examples and defining all key concepts.

Question 5a.

In order to fully answer this essay topic, students needed to:

- define globalisation and any other key concepts addressed (for example, national culture, human rights)
- evaluate, based on evidence, how globalisation has impacted on Australian life
- examine two social, economic or political changes to Australian life
- specify what change(s) has occurred as a result of globalisation; a sense of before and after the change was required
- adhere to an essay structure.

Appropriate themes examined included the erosion of national identity; racism; unemployment; and environmental damage.

Following is an example of part of a strong response:

Australia’s social life and ultimately its national identity has been harmed and even ... threatened by the drastic increase in globalisation. Australia is threatening to become a ‘carbon copy’ of America through ‘Americanisation’. Americanisation is the process in which the American culture floods Australia, to become similar to their ideas, values and ways of doing things. The flooding of American food companies, music and movies has diminished the possibility of an Australian identity, which is the way the rest of the world perceives Australia, as well as how Australia views itself. The lack of Australian movies supported while 95% of movies playing in cinemas are from America. The lack of support destroys Australian social cohesion. There [were once]



many television shows made in Australia such as Kingswood Country, Hey Dad and Acropolis Now. Now ... 85% of television shows are from America. Australian television is dying and so is its identity. Today 2 out of the 20 in the Top 20 music charts in Australia is by Australian artists. The rest are foreign with yet again the majority being from America.

The Australian economy has both positively and negatively been influenced by globalisation. The drastic increase in the Australian dollar to its current figure of about 93c show a positive future. However, many Australian businesses and brands are now threatened through the drastic increase in globalisation through free trade agreements and the ability to easily export cheap foreign brands [which] have flooded the Australian economy.

Question 5b.

This question required students to examine the positive and negative features of globalisation for Australian society. Students were required to:

- define globalisation and any other key concepts addressed
- examine two changes to Australian society as a result of globalisation
- take a position as to whether the features examined were positive or negative
- support their discussion with examples and evidence explored throughout the year
- adhere to an essay structure.

Appropriate examples that related to globalisation's positive features included increased recreational activities; work and travel opportunities; education; and awareness of social issues.

Arguments relevant to the position that globalisation is negative included environmental damage; un/underemployment; loss of local business; fear of terrorism; and racism.

Following is an excerpt from a high-scoring response that examined negative features of globalisation.

A negative impact of globalisation is the impact it had on the environment. The Great Barrier Reef is suffering due to the rapid growth of global warming. The failure of the Australian government to sign the Kyoto Protocol has put a huge stress on the environment. Australia has the largest greenhouse gas emissions per head of capita, and Australians in 2005 produced 599 tonnes of greenhouse gases... The Great Barrier Reef ... is said to be functionally extinct by 2030. This is taking away part of our national identity because the reef is a part of that. It will cause stress economically due to the loss of tourists which will put boot companies ... out of business.

Question 5c.

This essay topic required students to discuss the potential for globalisation to either promote or harm Australian democracy. In order to fully address this essay question, students needed to:

- define the key concepts of globalisation and democracy
- provide a response that focused on Australian society
- provide two kinds of change and support these examples with evidence
- examine whether the change promoted or harmed Australian society
- adhere to an essay structure.

Methods of promoting Australian democracy included adopting multiculturalism and supporting a culturally diverse nation; and using the media to bring global attention to the treatment of the indigenous population and the treatment of asylum seekers in off shore mandatory detention centres.

Ways of harming Australian democracy included the power of transnational corporations to erode national sovereignty; exploitation of vulnerable workers; workplace agreements; and the impact of the citizenship test.

Following is an example of part of a strong response:

Australia's policies have changed vastly since Federation in 1901 which has created a more democratic environment of equality. The policy of multiculturalism encourages equality for all people of all races whilst promoting cultural diversity within Australia. Until the multiculturalism policy (implemented in 1972 by the Whitlam government), Australian policy promoted a less democratic environment through prejudiced policies such as the White Australia Policy. Multiculturalism promotes a much more democratic environment as it encourages equality amongst all races and reduces prejudices between cultural groups. Australia's reaction towards the Cronulla Riots (December 2005) labelling the racist actions 'unAustralian' demonstrates the disgust the majority of Australia had towards the riots. The reaction shows that Australia believed the riots went against democratic policy and the use of racial insults and violence did not support our multicultural values. Multiculturalism has reduced the importance of Anglo Saxon culture and encouraged cultural diversity which in turn has encouraged different people from different cultures to participate in the workforces, parliament and society in general.