



GENERAL COMMENTS

Student responses to the 2009 Sociology examination included a range of interesting case studies and examples, such as the impact of the Black Saturday bushfires, the value of culturally diverse communities within Australian society, the medium-term impact of the Northern Territory intervention on remote indigenous communities and the value of communication technologies which allow citizens to exercise their democratic rights and practise global citizenship.

Students who paid attention to the requirements of each question, defined key concepts and supported their discussion with evidence, performed well. In addition, students whose answers reflected a detailed understanding of a specific community case study and who showed an intimate knowledge of cultural groups and victims of inequality also did well. It is pleasing to report that students appear to have recognised the value of adhering to an essay structure. The explanation of key concepts and ideas and the use of evidence are also improving.

SPECIFIC INFORMATION

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

Section A

Question 1

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Average
%	4	3	10	12	11	15	14	13	8	6	3	5.1

Students were required to discuss the interrelationship between the concepts of inclusion and exclusion. They needed to refer to the activities or attitudes of a specific community. The range of acceptable community definitions included sociology theory, such as Ferdinand Tonnies's description of Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft groups, and generally accepted definitions that described the key features of traditional and modern groups.

In order to thoroughly address this question it was necessary for students to define inclusion and exclusion. They also needed to explain the interrelationship between the two concepts (that is, the ambiguous nature – one factor that can make one person feel included can be the same factor that excludes someone else). The types of examples used to illustrate the difference between the two concepts included:

- inclusion – membership criteria, rules/values, rituals/rites/customs, dress, language and shared history/experiences
- exclusion – methods used to distinguish between insiders and outsiders, such as applying selection criteria or engaging in violence.

Students needed to use specific examples of a group when they outlined the community interaction (activities and attitudes). Essentially, this required them to outline what the group was or was not doing.

Areas for improvement include the need to provide specific evidence to support discussion, and only referring to one community when requested to do so. Some students overlooked the requirement to provide examples of the key concepts. It is important that students are cautious about the selection of communities. There continue to be many examples of groups rather than communities. Some groups have features of a community; however, students need to be able to outline their features.

Following is an excerpt from a good response.

The Greek school community is a language school located in Mentone and consists of mainly Greek members. Inclusion and exclusion are demonstrated by the community in many ways. Inclusion refers to welcoming a person into a community and making them feel a part of it; thus resulting in a strong sense of belonging. Whilst exclusion involves isolating and alienating an individual from a community, resulting in a weakened sense of belonging.

Inclusion can be evident by the Greek school community as they include all males and females from the ages of 5 – 18. The community also includes members who are of a different ethnic origin. This clearly demonstrates the positive and accepting attitude of the Greek school community, as they allow any individual from any race to join. Exclusion may be evident in the Greek school community, however this is not a deliberate act. Individuals who wish to learn the Greek language and culture may feel a weakened sense of belonging, mainly based on the fact that they are not of Greek origin. Therefore individuals may not feel they fit into the community, as they not share religious beliefs or other traditional interests.



Question 2

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Average
%	6	6	12	14	14	13	12	9	7	4	3	4.5

To successfully address this question, students needed to explain two ways that the government had impacted on a community or show how a community had influenced government decision making. It was also necessary for students to provide details about which level of government was involved and the parts of policy that had affected the group. In addition, good answers would have included policy details such as the degree of funding or the process involved in law making.

Good answers showed a clear sense of ‘before’ and ‘after’ the implementation of the policy on the life of the community. The range of examples included the local and state governments’ response to the Black Saturday bushfires, state and federal government financial support for regional communities dependent upon car part manufacturing industries, and refugee support programs.

Areas that were not completed well included the need to refer to only one community, the requirement to keep examples within 30 years, and the need to be specific about the ‘level’ of government and provide detail about the policy.

The following is an excerpt from a good response.

An example of a community which has been affected by government is the community of Wadeye. Wadeye is the largest Indigenous community in the Northern Territory, consisting of 2215 people. The government has impacted Wadeye through its implementation of the NTER (Northern Territory Emergency Response) and its welfare system. The NTER of 2007 was in response to the high levels of child sex abuse [of] indigenous children as stated in the [Little] Children are Sacred report. The NTER targeted 73 communities which were considered to be high risk and Wadeye was one of these communities. The NTER had positive impacts on Wadeye, increasing police attendance from 8 to 13, this further increased the level of safety and security [of] women and children. The NTER carried out compulsory health checks, school attendance [checks] and alcohol bans. These had positive impacts as it shows the government is making changes to address the poor living standards and living conditions of indigenous people which may help to reduce the 17 year life expectancy gap of indigenous [compared to] non indigenous [Australians]. Although NTER had positive intentions, many indigenous people were not happy as they saw it as another paternalistic approach in which the government thought they knew what was best.

Section B

Question 3a.

Marks	0	1	2	Average
%	2	18	80	1.8

Correct examples included:

- giving the Australian of the Year award to Professor Dodson on Australia Day and being shocked at the caption on his T-shirt, ‘Australia Day Sucks’ on the indigenous flag
- mockery of the meaning of Australia Day
- the rejection of Australia Day as a ‘celebration’
- the meaning and potential of national culture – unity or disunity
- the role of the government in working toward reconciliation
- non-indigenous Australia’s narrative/legend being challenged.

This question was well answered by most students. Students were required to explain why Prime Minister Kevin Rudd had a shocked facial expression in the visual representation. In order to receive full marks, students needed to provide specific evidence from the visual representation and explain why the Prime Minister was shocked.

Question 3b.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	6	17	32	31	14	2.3

Appropriate examples included:

- symbols – the indigenous flag on Professor Dodson’s T-shirt, the Australian flag on the parliament building, the thong on the award
- institutions – parliament, the Prime Minister, the Australian awards system, citizenship ceremony, Australian Labor Party National President



- values and beliefs – ‘Aussie of the year’, Prime Minister Rudd in a suit/Mick Dodson in a T-shirt and an Akubra hat, education – ‘Professor’ Dodson
- democratic principles – ‘respectful, but straightforward no’, ‘free country’, ‘have a conversation’, ‘let’s have a talk’.

Overall, student responses to this question were very good. To answer the question correctly, students needed to explain which Australian symbols, institutions, values and beliefs were present in the representations and then comment on how they reflect Australian national culture. Students needed to include a definition of national culture in their response (for example, shared behaviours, beliefs, values, symbols such as our freedoms, a fair go and egalitarianism). In addition, students needed to refer to both the article and the visual representation. Their discussion needed to connect the example to the concept of national culture.

Areas that were poorly addressed by many students included not referring to both representations and not defining the concept of Australian national culture.

The following is an example of a good response.

Culture is learnt, is ever-changing and develops over time. It may be influenced by things such as history, symbols and icons. The Australian culture refers to the national identity of our [country] based on concepts such as ‘mateship’, ‘egalitarianism’ and ‘fair-go’, and has been influenced by the past history of European settlement in Australian and the emergence of multiculturalism in the early 1970s. In the representations, the value of ‘equality’ is referred to, in the context of ‘closing the gap’ (providing more equity) between indigenous and non-indigenous Australians, a key concept which Australians pride themselves on. Furthermore, the symbol of a ‘thong’ is used to show the trophy for ‘Aussie of the Year’, indicating Australia’s apparent beach culture and stereotype of ‘Aussie’ vernacular speech.

Question 3c.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	2	9	31	47	12	2.6

This question required students to evaluate the debate between the supporters of Australia Day being on 26 January and those who see the date as ‘Invasion Day’. Students needed to define national culture. It was also necessary to identify the two sides of the debate and outline the ‘why’ arguments for and against. In doing so, students needed to articulate their own position about the debate.

One side of the debate related to the view of indigenous communities (and others) that 26 January is ‘Invasion Day’. The types of evidence from the representations included ‘to many indigenous Australians, in fact, most indigenous Australians, it really reflects the day in which our world came crashing down [changed forever in negative ways]’ and ‘not allowing a dialogue about a new date would be “another act of exclusion” towards indigenous people’.

The other position (that of Prime Minister Rudd) is to keep Australia Day on 26 January. There is a sense of pride in Australia’s convict beginnings. The types of evidence from the representations included ‘it was more important to focus on practical measures to close the gap’ and ‘Former indigenous affairs minister Mal Brough accused Professor Dodson of being “divisive” and said he should use his award to address indigenous disadvantage over [rather than] pursuing “symbolic” causes’.

Similarly to Question 3c., students needed to include more examples from the representations and/or external evidence to support their answers.

The following is an excerpt from a good response.

Australia’s national culture is the symbols, events and icons that represent the nation such as the flag, ANZAC Day and vegemite. Australia’s national culture is celebrated with Australia Day on January 26th, however there is a strong debate over whether this date is appropriate. ‘Historically, 26 January 1788 is the date of which the first European settlers arrived’ ... this date does not acknowledge that the Indigenous people[s] that were living [on] our land thousands of years prior. When British settlers arrived, they claimed Australia was ‘terra nullius’ – land belonging to no one, when in fact there were between 300,000 and 1 million indigenous inhabitants. As Australia Day does not acknowledge indigenous people who are a key part of our national culture, it is seen as disrespectful and inappropriate to take place on 26th January. Indigenous [Australians] argue it is ‘invasion day’ and the ‘day in which our world came crashing down’.



Question 3d.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Average
%	3	7	11	16	15	16	11	8	6	4	2	4.5

It was necessary for students to examine the connection between Australian identity and Australia's image as a multicultural nation when answering this question. Students also needed to define the concepts of Australian identity (that is, how Australians see themselves being perceived by others) and multiculturalism (that is, policy since the 1970s and that it is a reflection of our culturally diverse society). Good answers commented on what the representations suggested about identity and multiculturalism and supported this discussion with external evidence.

Answers which explored the positive view included discussion about:

- Australia having made progress by having an indigenous leader as Australian of the Year
- the opportunity indigenous Australians have to make their presence felt through participating in Australia Day celebrations
- the ability to make comments about Australia Day that are critical of government, reflecting the Australian values of justice and 'a fair go'.

Answers which explored the negative view included discussion about:

- Australia being divided, specifically the different narratives of history and identity (that is, the celebration of the arrival of the First Fleet versus sorrow at invasion)
- the meaning and potential of our national culture and multiculturalism when indigenous people are not consulted about Australia Day/excluded from the consultation process
- the fact that Australian identity is contested.

Areas that were poorly completed by students included the failure to refer to both representations and not making clear links between examples used and their connection to the debate.

Section C

Question 4a.

Marks	0	1	2	Average
%	6	24	70	1.7

Most students responded very well to this question. They were required to define the concept of democracy. Students were expected to refer to more than one element of the concept in order to get full marks.

The range of elements included political system, representative government, associated freedoms, the right to vote, promotion of equality, people's voice being respected and associated rights and responsibilities.

Question 4b.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	2	5	42	45	6	2.5

Many students addressed this question very well. They were required to identify two examples of human rights from the representations and then explain their importance to Australian society. In order to fully address this question, students needed to define human rights. It was also important to use one example from each of the representations. If students only referred to the first article, their explanation needed to reflect the 'values' discussed in the second article.

The first article, 'Your Rights, Your Say' contained multiple examples of potential freedoms and benefits from an Australian Human Rights Act. Students could also have referred to the following statements from the second article, 'Citizens gained', 'Australia's lifestyle, political stability, democratic society, tertiary education and employment' and 'for others who have fled war and persecution'. It was anticipated that students would discuss how these rights have resulted in Australia being a relatively peaceful and harmonious nation, with the ability, for example, to strike and to have freedom of expression.

Students should have paid more attention to the need to define key concepts, and the use of examples to support their discussion.

The following is an excerpt from a good response.



Freedom of expression is a human right, which is essential to Australia. As a democratic society, individuals are encouraged to actively participate in the community, engaging in activities such as lobbying the government, writing letters and signing petitions as ways to voice their opinions without fear of intimidation or persecution. This is essential in maintaining an equal society where individual expression is supported.

Freedom of thought, belief and religion is a human right essential to Australia. Since the emergence of multiculturalism in the 1970s by the Whitlam government, Australia has experienced an influx of migrants from a number of countries, many with individual customs and cultural practices. They are encouraged to maintain their culture, thought, belief and religion in Australia.

Question 4c.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	7	14	31	34	15	2.4

This question required students to explore the concept of active citizenship along with its associated rights and responsibilities. It was therefore essential for students to define citizen and/or active citizenship, or explain the meaning of rights and responsibilities. Good answers took a clear position (either they agreed or disagreed, or both) and used evidence from the representations or external evidence to support their discussion.

Similar to Question 4c., students needed to pay more attention to the definitions of key concepts and the use of evidence to support their discussion.

Examples of the different positions included:

- no – citizens are only mandated to pay taxes, obey laws, serve on juries and so on, and being part of a democracy gives people the choice about being involved
- yes – being involved in a GetUp! style campaign is consistent with the behaviour of an active citizen and it also reflects Australia’s core values.

The following is an excerpt from a good response.

Citizenship is the legal recognition that a person is a member of a nation and with that have rights (vote), responsibilities (paying taxes) and privileges (having an Australian passport). It is a citizens right to participate and be involved in a ‘GetUp!’ style campaign such as stated in the representation. Being a citizen allows a person to contribute to society in ways such as raising awareness and addressing issues like education, health and housing [needs]. It is also a responsibility as citizens that we act in ways to “protect the rights of all” Australians, including ‘marginalised, disadvantaged minorities’. By getting involved in a ‘GetUp!’ style campaign, it ensures the Parliament cannot ‘overlook human rights considerations if it wants to pass controversial laws or areas like voting, privacy and freedom of speech’.

Question 4d.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Average
%	3	3	6	12	13	20	13	13	11	5	2	5.1

This question called for students to discuss whether they felt Australian society would benefit from a Human Rights Act. Students were able to take either position as long as they referred to two groups that they had studied during the year. In doing so, they needed to highlight how human rights had been impinged or how Australia’s existing democratic system had protected human rights.

It was necessary for students to define key concepts, such as democracy and human rights (or what is meant by the Human Rights Act). Good answers used at least one piece of external evidence and at least one reference to the representation(s). Their discussions clearly identified the connection between the examples used and the need for human rights protection, or what existing protections were in place.

‘No’ examples included:

- Australia currently has legislation and other protections in place. For example, Australia recently endorsed the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People 2009, a free media to create awareness of injustice, workplace unions/awards, various pieces of legislations such as the *Age Discrimination Act 2004*, *Racial Discrimination Act 1975*, *Sex Discrimination Act 1984*, *Australian Human Rights Commission Act 1986* and the *Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities 2006*
- Australia is a successful democracy where citizens enjoy political, social, sexual, economic and artistic freedoms
- the existence of the ‘Get Up!’ campaign demonstrates that freedoms are well established in Australian society.



'Yes' examples included:

- Australia needs a more unified and powerful method in place to ensure that human rights are maintained
- there are many areas where improvement could/should occur (for example, homelessness and indigenous social disadvantage)
- a Human Rights Act would make explicit the rights of all citizens.

It was important for students to provide examples that are specific breaches of fundamental rights. For example, when discussing young people, an appropriate example of a right would be the inability to vote and being unable to make decisions about organ donation. Examples such as not being able to smoke cigarettes, purchase alcohol, drive a car or watch R/MA rated movies are not considered fundamental human or citizenship rights.

The following is an excerpt from a good response.

In a democracy such as Australia, a Human Rights Act is still necessary as [the] experiences of citizenship groups such as [the]homeless and ATSI (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander) peoples reflect that they have not always been treated equally.

A person is classified as homeless if they have inadequate access to safe and secure housing or shelter. In Australia, 1 in every 200 people are homeless, totalling 105,000 people in Australia. Homelessness can be caused by factors such as poverty, domestic violence and the break down of families ... Homeless people do not have an adequate standard of living (Article 25) and face difficulties receiving an education (Article 26) [of the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights]. Homeless people are also disadvantaged as they cannot apply with the Australian Electoral Commission to vote, thus preventing them from participating in the government of their country.

Australian Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) peoples have in the past been treated unfairly and thus a Human Rights Act would improve their experiences of day to day life. ATSI people did not receive the right to vote until 1962, and were not counted in the referendum until 1967. This highlights that the original inhabitants of this land were considered non-existent before 1967. The referendum passed with 96% of Australia voting yes. ATSI people's living conditions have been described as 'third world' ... In a country that is wealthy and successful it shows the many long term effects ATSI people face with inequalities in areas such as healthcare, living standards and living conditions. In the community of Wadeye there was an average of 14 people in a 2 ½ bedroom house. These factors highlight the disadvantages and inequalities ATSI people face in Australia, further emphasising that a Human Rights Act would improve their inequalities.

Section D

Question 5

Question	none	A	B	C
%	2	67	24	7

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	Average
%	3	1	3	2	4	4	6	4	8	8	9	8	8	7	8	5	6	3	2	1	1	10.2

Students have continued to improve in their approach to the essay writing section of the exam. More essays contained a formal structure, definitions of key concepts, a detailed discussion of key ideas and appropriate examples. The main area for improvement is the need to address all parts of complex questions. For example, students should outline their position clearly if requested to do so and provide the correct number of examples.

Question 5a.

In order to fully answer this question students needed to:

- define globalisation (including the economic, social, political and technological dimensions)
- provide an explanation of the concept of sustainability in terms of environmental and social implications
- write in essay format
- have an identifiable position – for, against or both
- establish clear links between the effects of the globalisation process (provide examples) and environmental and social sustainability
- develop the 'future' concept (i.e. what do they see as a positive or negative future scenario)
- explore two impacts – one environmental and one social
- provide detailed supporting evidence.



Relevant examples included:

- the importance of global environmental agreements such as the Kyoto Protocol and the need for an emissions trading scheme to reduce greenhouse gas emissions
- the occurrence of racial tensions, such as Cronulla, not boding well for racial relations into the future
- concern for ongoing job loss (for example, Pacific Brands) increasing unemployment into the future as companies try to compete globally
- the potential of immigration to provide skilled professionals when shortages occur in the future
- Australia's vulnerability due to integrated economies being susceptible to economic problems in other countries (for example, the Global Financial Crisis).

The main areas that students completed poorly were the need to address the 'future' part of the question and the failure to define the key concepts.

Question 5b.

In order to fully answer this question students needed to:

- define globalisation, including a clear definition and understanding of globalisation (including economic, social, political, technological dimensions)
- include a definition/explanation of global citizenship
- have an identifiable position and agree or disagree (or both) with the statement
- show an understanding of the statement 'irreversible and irresistible'
- provide two examples of citizen (or citizen group) responses
- provide detailed supporting evidence
- describe the changes brought about by the globalisation process.

Relevant examples explored included:

- citizens working for transnational corporations
- Australian Bureau of Statistics figures that suggest there is a high level of access to and use of Internet services within Australia which can be used for active citizenship
- businesses embracing change through increased trade.

Many students simply focused on what people can do in their daily lives (for example, buy a diverse range of food and clothes) rather than making links to active global citizenship.

Question 5c.

In order to fully answer this question students needed to:

- define globalisation including a clear definition and understanding of globalisation (including economic, social, political, technological dimensions)
- define democratic practice
- define human rights
- have an identifiable position and agree or disagree (or both) with the statement
- link technologies to democratic practice and human rights
- include one issue/example relating to democratic practice and one issue/example relating to human rights
- include issues that have a clear Australian connection
- provide relevant supporting evidence to support claims made
- arrive at a logical conclusion which was consistent with the evidence provided.

This essay was a less common choice by students. Examples included the ability of non-government organisations such as Urban Seed to use the Internet to educate and lobby government. There was also considerable discussion about the opportunity for people's voices to be heard via blogs and YouTube videos.