

**SOCIAL STUDIES MATSEC – May 2011
Markers' Report**

UNIVERSITY OF MALTA

**SECONDARY EDUCATION CERTIFICATE
SEC**

SOCIAL STUDIES

May 2012

EXAMINERS' REPORT

**MATRICULATION AND SECONDARY EDUCATION
CERTIFICATE EXAMINATIONS BOARD**

Part 1: Statistical Information

The total number of candidates who registered for the examination was 1644. Of these 769, nine more than last year, registered for Option A while 875, or 100 less than last year, registered for Option B. Of these, 14 Option A candidates were absent for both sessions of the examination while 72 candidates of Option B were absent from both sessions of the examination.

Table 1: Distribution of grades for Social Studies SEC – May 2012 Session:

Grades	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	U	Absent	TOTAL
No. of candidates										
Option A	16	63	70	119	222	-	-	265	14	769
Option B	-	-	-	114	197	120	84	288	72	875
Total %	1	3.8	4.3	14.2	25.5	7.3	5.1	33.6	5.2	100

Part 2: Comments regarding candidates' performance

Table 2: Paper 1 – Option A (Total Present 755) (Total Absent 14):

Question Number	A1	A2	A3	A4	A5	B1	B2	B3	B4	B5
Total Answers	755	755	755	755	755	755	755	755	755	755
Average Mark	4.55	6.41	4.67	3.18	6.71	6.56	3.85	5.21	3.15	7.36

Table 3: Paper 1 – Option B (Total Present 801) (Total Absent 74):

Question Number	A1	A2	A3	A4	A5	B1	B2	B3	B4	B5
Total Answers	801	801	801	801	801	801	801	801	801	801
Average Mark	3.25	4.99	3.39	2.39	5.30	2.48	2.58	4.01	2.51	4.18

NOTE: Paper 1 was divided into two sections (Section A and Section B) each having five questions and each carrying a maximum of 50 marks. Candidates had to answer all questions, hence any question left unanswered was marked as 0. The marks for Section A were 8, 12, 8, 8 and 14 and for Section B the marks were 10, 6, 13, 6 and 15 respectively.

Table 4: Paper 2 – Option A (Total Present 754) (Total Absent 15):

Question Number	A1	A2	B3	B4	C5	C6	D7	D8
Total Answers		245	509	498	256	320	435	304 449

Question Number	A1	A2	B3	B4	A4	B5	C6	D7	D8
Total Answers	-	245	509	498	256	320	435	304	449
Average Mark	-	11.80	12.60	10.50	12.30	9.73	10.60	8.79	9.73

Table 5: Paper 2 – Option B (Total Present 795) (Total Absent 80):

Question Number	A1	A2	B3	B4	C5	C6	D7	D8	
Total Answers		654	139	519	265	652	142	126	664
Average Mark		10.5	12.3	8.6	7.41	13	14.5	10.2	15

Question Number	A1	A2	B3	B4	A4	B5	C6	D7	D8
Total Answers	-	654	139	519	265	652	142	126	664
Average Mark	-	10.50	12.30	8.60	7.41	13	14.5	10.2	15.00

NOTE: In Paper 2 candidates had to answer four questions, one from each section (A, B, C, D) each carrying a maximum of 25 marks.

For Option A candidates, question A2 was the most popular and it also carried the highest average mark (12.6), while question A1 was the least popular and question D7 carried the lowest average mark (8.79).

For Option B candidates, question D8 was the most popular and question D7 the least popular. Question D8 also carried the highest average (15), while question B4 carried the lowest average (7.41).

Markers noted that as in past examinations there was a number of Option B candidates who ignored the rubrics. Such candidates did not answer four questions as was expected: there was one candidate who answered only two questions, 14 candidates answered only three questions and four candidates attempted to provide an answer for all questions.

Language Option

The number of candidates who opted to answer in English remains low, though slightly higher than last year.

Table 6: Candidates opting to answer in English:

	Option A	Option B
Paper 1	187 or 24.76% of 755 present	186 or 23.22% of 801 present
Paper 2	176 or 23.34% of 754 present	167 or 21% of 795 present
All candidates:		
Paper 1	363 or 23.33% of 1556 present	
Paper 2 A/B	343 or 22.14% of 1549 present	

Part 3: Comments regarding Paper 1

1. As in previous examinations, a good number of candidates indicated that they had some knowledge of topics indicated in the syllabus but many still rely on memorisation of lesson notes

when formulating their answers. Such candidates give little regard to critical and reflective evaluation.

2. Many are still unable to apply concepts to practical and real situations or to give clear definitions. Moreover, many often failed to analyse the questions properly and tended to focus on a key word whilst ignoring the rest of the question.

3. Some candidates indicated that they had some difficulties in comprehending the passages.

4. In their attempt to explain and comment on the issues raised in the questions most of the candidates relied more on their cognitive skills rather than on making use of the sociological tools of analysis. References to concepts and theories which enrich and refine reflective thinking were not much in evidence in the candidates' answers.

Specific Remarks on Paper 1

Section A

Question 1:

(a) The educational sectors of the Maltese educational system were generally identified by a good number of candidates but there were candidates who confused the educational system with education providers or even with different sectors of the economy.

(b) A sizeable number of candidates could not fully understand what reform to an educational system implies – many referred to the introduction of whiteboards.

Question 2:

(a) Curriculum: candidates often associated the curriculum with the syllabus or programme of studies.

(b) New Technologies: though the majority of candidates referred to ICT to illustrate their definition, some candidates were too generic and not clear in their explanation. (c) Globalisation: this term was generally well explained, with some candidates using the phrase 'global village' with reference to the operations of MNCs in the world market to make their explanation clearer.

(d) Social interaction: the majority of candidates explained social interaction in terms of inter-relationships which entail human communication and exchange of ideas.

Question 3:

- (a) Lifelong learning: most candidates managed to give a good explanation.
- (b) The University of the Third Age was the most mentioned opportunity in this regard. There were candidates who did not indicate any relevant opportunity.

Question 4:

Regarding schools acting as communities of learning, many candidates argued that in its role of being a major agency of socialisation the school becomes a society in miniature.

Question 5:

- (a) The two challenges facing Maltese society according to most candidates are first the brain drain, seen as being one of the negative side effects of globalisation, and secondly the relatively high number of students who opt out of the educational system once they reach the compulsory school leaving age. Other challenges mentioned were the threat of unemployment and the present financial crisis.
- (b) How education can be a preparation for adult life: many candidates wrote about the educational process at school as a preparation for life. Candidates wrote about the correspondence between education and the world of work by emphasizing the instrumental value of school in the sense that it equips the individual with the necessary knowledge and skills/competences which one needs to integrate in the labour market. Many referred to the importance of academic results as means for further education and better employment.

Section B**Question 1:**

Although candidates seem to understand what stereotypes (1a) and roles (1c) mean, they could not give a precise definition of these concepts. Some candidates managed to give apt examples to convey their meaning. Moreover, values (1b) and socialisation (1d) were often defined in highly generic terms and no candidate gave a correct definition of social policy (1e).

Question 2:

On the preparation of the young for the reality of adult roles, a good number of candidates indicated the austerity of duty instilled by the discipline prevailing at school together with the parallelism between the way the school operates and the practices prevailing at the world of work as the main functional factors in this preparation. Others also referred to socialisation within the family, summer work or work exposure, job shadowing and volunteer work with NGOs.

Question 3:

(a) On the social transition experienced by young people: the move from secondary to post-secondary and eventually to tertiary level is perceived to be the main transition experienced by young people. A few referred to the physical, social and psychological changes experienced in teenage years. There were some who referred to the transition from the primary to the secondary level of education and also to married status.

(b) In their answer as to why this should be a concern to policy makers, most candidates indicated that they have very little idea of what the role of a policy maker is. They engaged in highly rhetoric language making use of the oft repeated slogan that teenagers are the leaders of tomorrow. Some referred to problems resulting from drug abuse, juvenile delinquency and unemployment.

Question 4:

A number of candidates managed to pinpoint factors contributing the impression that society may have of young people as rule breakers by pointing out youth disposition to be heavy drinkers of alcohol, the high prevalence of drug addiction among youth and their sense of rebellion. There were some who referred to certain types of clothes worn by teenagers, young people driving with an excessive speed, and others giving a bad name to the young generation by being found guilty by the courts for various misdemeanours. Other candidates seemed to be more intent on accusing society of being oblivious to the good deeds performed by youths.

Question 5:

Characteristics of youth culture: in identifying such characteristics candidates generally commented on changes between the present generation of youth and their forebears in their general approach to life as regards entertainment and leisure, weekend activities, music and attire. A few referred to participation in church societies and involvement in voluntary work.

Very often they sounded preachy and moralistic, some even condemning the leisure ethic of youth. Overall, in their attempt to address this issue candidates were neither reflective nor analytical. Moreover, there were candidates who simply repeated what they had written in their answer to the previous question.

Part 4: Comments regarding Paper 2A

1. Markers are of the opinion that only a limited number of students were well prepared and well disposed to engage in critical forms of argumentation. Some candidates even showed evidence of intensive reading of relevant texts but many do not have a satisfactory level of critical reflection.

2. The majority of candidates persisted in producing stereotyped or superficial answers without even attempting to comprehend fully the texts provided and without seeking to apply reflective and analytical skills. They seem to be under the impression that the paper is not demanding and that one may answer the questions on the sole basis of common sense logic. Candidates need to be made aware of the fact that a slight acquaintance with the areas in question will not be enough for even a pass-mark.

3. The impression prevails that a good number of candidates have no idea of the Syllabus and have sat for the examination/or even been encouraged to sit for this examination on the basis that Social Studies is a 'soft' subject. Indeed, many answers consisted of common-sense reactions, devoid of reflective and investigative skills in the discussion of social studies. Many answers indicate clearly that, generally speaking, candidates need further preparation to enable them to adequately appreciate social issues, to formulate a critical awareness of socio-political-economic issues, and to be able to introduce an imaginative perspective in their answers. Candidates seem unable to use their own individual thinking skills and therefore whenever questions necessitated this skill they found difficulty in answering.

4. Many of the answers show that candidates generally still lack theoretical knowledge and consequently fail to go beyond popular knowledge and interpretation when it comes to the knowledge, understanding and interpretation of various social issues.

Specific remarks on Paper 2A

Question A1:

Candidates were requested to discuss how human interaction constitutes the basis of social life and, therefore, provide a critical account of the aspects regarding social interaction. Yet only a small number of candidates elaborated on the advantages and disadvantages of human interaction such as the negative experience of living alone, the feeling of frustration when boycotted by the group, and that it is only through others that we learn the rules of conduct, the different norms and roles in society and what our role is. A number of candidates discussed how a sense of self-worth, solidarity, and security are acquired through one's participation in the group and that our self-identity is learned through the interaction with different others. Other commendable points included how our language is developed in social interaction, issues in the development of primary and secondary socialisation, and how the exchange of human interaction enhances humanity, makes human relationship meaningful, and enables us to integrate in society.

Question A2:

This question requested candidates to analyse the statement that 'inequality in society is another form of social injustice' and to suggest ways of overcoming examples of inequality. A good number of candidates succeeded in explaining inequalities, social injustice and how one can overcome inequalities. Some highlighted how social inequalities refer to unequal distribution of resources, and unequal opportunities in education, welfare services, housing, employment, and how social injustice refers to forms of discrimination (open/hidden) based on gender, belief, ethnicity, age, sexuality, ability and class. Most common examples provided by candidates, revolved around gender and disability issues, rather than the lack of learning resources for children from low-income families, lack of investment in employment opportunities for unskilled people, and obstacles in career promotion because of political or religious convictions, or forbidding access to recreational centres because of race or ethnicity. Possible actions to overturn social inequalities and injustices highlighted by some candidates included the provision of more and better resources for less challenged children at school, creating opportunities of equal career progression for women, and identifying the vulnerable groups to give them all the help they need.

Question B3:

Candidates were expected to discuss the statement that 'young people often seek to assert their identity and autonomy'. Although this was the second most popular question, it was disappointing to note that only a small number of candidates produced a good answer. Many

based their comments on hearsay or folk wisdom in the hope that some of it would hit the mark. However, successful candidates did identify that stage of development when young people are consolidating individuality and identity, issues of conflict in adolescence, the great influence of peer pressure, role imitation, group membership, the difference between chronological age and psychological age, and how the family still offers a base for activities.

Question B4:

This question dealt with trends in Maltese society which may indicate a process of secularisation. Candidates were expected to discuss the meaning of term 'secularisation' and provide adequate examples that demonstrate this trend in contemporary society. The question was quite popular among candidates who listed various issues such as: declining patterns of Sunday Mass or other church service attendance; more frequent challenging of the authority of the institutional church; seeking advice from professionals rather than members of the clergy; more widespread distrust of the clergy; challenging the permanence and indissolubility of marriage; increasing number of civil marriages; the introduction of divorce legislation; more lobbying on the separation of church and state; trends towards substituting institutionalised religion with a privatised form of religion and clamouring for disengaging the jurisdiction of the Civil Court from that of the Ecclesiastical Tribunal in cases of declaration of nullity of marriage.

Question C5:

In this question, candidates were requested to discuss how notwithstanding the progress that has been made with regards to gender equality, Feminists still regard our society as patriarchal. Candidates were expected to show how women and men do not have equal opportunities in both public and private spheres. Though not so well answered by many, there were candidates who gave examples of gender-based inequality including how women are still being considered as primary carers responsible for housework and childcare compared to men as the main breadwinners. Others pointed out that women are under represented in the higher grades both in the public and private sector, have fewer opportunities for promotion and are still under represented also in politics, and that gender discrimination still prevails in the work-place where women are paid less. Few candidates wrote about gender inequality in the media and that women are still largely concentrated in gender-specific jobs such as nurses, teachers, clerks and secretaries in spite of the fact that they are now receiving the same education as males resulting in their being capable to take men's traditional jobs.

Question C6:

Here candidates were asked to explain the difference between poverty and social exclusion and to discuss the same with reference to the different forms of poverty and social exclusion that one may experience. Many candidates succeeded in explaining the difference between poverty and social exclusion, some even distinguishing between absolute and relative poverty. However, the majority of examples referred to the situation in developing countries. When seeking to describe the different forms of social exclusion, answers were very superficial. Also, although reference was made to persons with disability, older persons, former convicts and the unemployed as examples of the socially excluded, very few did succeed in explaining how and why these people are handicapped in the sense that they do find it extremely difficult to be integrated in mainstream society.

Question D7:

This question focused on the economic and social consequences of having the international market dominated by multinational corporations. The majority of the candidates do not have a clear knowledge of multinational corporations. They practically ignored the question regarding the consequences of having the international markets dominated by these multinational corporations. The emphasis was on the dominating effects namely a market dominated by a small number of transnational corporations. Only a few candidates pointed out that the existence of such markets was forcing local small enterprises/shops to close down, or to highlight the bad effects/consequences associated with such corporations in many countries especially developing ones, the exploitation of workers giving them very poor wages, unregulated working conditions, depletion of natural resources, the encouragement of consumer culture as a result of global capitalism, the dependence and exploitation of poor countries especially those producing cash crops, price dumping, etc.

Question D8:

In this question, candidates were expected to explain why the process of urbanisation may have both negative and positive effects. A good number of candidates provided good answers distinguishing between the advantages and the disadvantages of urbanisation. Advantages mentioned, included: the concentration of amenities and services in one place, better job availability, improved standards of living as well as diverse forms of entertainment. The most common disadvantages mentioned, were pollution resulting from factory and traffic fumes, overcrowding and deforestation. A very small number of candidates also listed the intermixing of cultures, the accessibility of better healthcare, education facilities and transport systems, among the advantages. Higher crime rates, impersonal and fast life, weakening of community bonds,

and social inequalities were also listed as some of the disadvantages brought about through urbanisation. There were quite a few candidates who could not define urbanisation, limiting their answer to a physical change from a rural area to an urban area, and others who mixed up urbanisation with globalisation.

Part 5: Comments regarding Paper 2B

1. Markers noted that though most responses were low on sociological content, there were some answers, such as those related with youth culture and environmental pollution, which were of above average quality due to the fact that candidates may have absorbed relevant knowledge from other fields. There is still the recurrent problem in Social Studies that many candidates are sitting for the examination with an attitude that general knowledge is sufficient to enable gain a pass mark. It seems that few come prepared with the necessary skills and a good social scientific knowledge of the topics covered in the Syllabus. The sociological framework expected at this level, together with an understanding of concepts and interpretative skills are still wanting.

2. There is an indication, however, that greater awareness of environmental priorities and more education in environmental values are taking ground.

3. Although questions on stratification and socialisation are set almost every year, there are candidates who are still finding it difficult to indicate a satisfactory level of understanding these sociological terms. Few candidates are aware of the media as an agent of socialisation and of the influence and implications of media education on society.

4. It was noted that structured questions with the number of marks allotted to each part of the question, have helped candidates become aware of the level of answering expected. In fact though the general level of answers is still low and sometimes somewhat superficial, a significant improvement in the way candidates presented their answers is evident – whilst adhering to the structured question, a number of candidates produced answers in an essay form or, at least, produced some good paragraphs.

Specific remarks regarding Paper 2B

Question A1:

Most answers on socialisation were of an average level. Most candidates could mention two agents of socialisation but then could not relate them well to the teaching internalisation of norms, values and general cultural patterns. Many candidates knew what sanctions are and distinguished between negative and positive sanctions but similarly few linked them well to the process of socialisation. Socialisation within the family was described fairly well by a significant number of candidates although many others did not use sociological concepts but gave answers based on general knowledge such as that the family guides us in our decisions, provides a loving environment, teaches us respect, and other similar clichés.

Question A2:

Most candidates could define stratification and social mobility to an extent. Very few, however, could identify three types of stratification as required by the question. Most of the candidates identified only the three social classes instead. A significant number of others understood 'types' as meaning examples and wrote about the upper, middle and lower classes. Answers pertaining to how one could be socially mobile were adequate although few candidates could mention more than two or three points including winning the lottery and marrying a rich person rather than more common ways of achieving mobility such as through education and career progression and promotion.

Question B3:

Very few candidates could define 'secularization' and identify characteristics related to it. Characteristics mentioned were frequently irrelevant since they referred to examples of secularisation like conflicts, cohabitation, abortion and the recent divorce legislation in Malta. There were also a few cases where the term 'secularisation' was interchanged with 'stratification'. This is one of the questions based largely on general knowledge where very few candidates could demonstrate how religion is manifested in society. Instead many wrote about the importance of religion in society and its functions which they could get from religious knowledge. Regarding the difference between religion and church, quite a large number of candidates linked religion with belief and referred to different religions. However, for most candidates a church is the building where Christians go to hear Mass.

Question B4:

Most candidates could not identify the three powers in a democracy referring to the government, the president, the people and organisations instead. Many students restricted the meaning of 'pluralism' to choice although in their discussion of how it can be practised and in how it can strengthen democracy, there were some reference to different voices in society and the importance of different expressions. Occasionally, it was explained as choice between different political parties and different radio stations. But even in this rather low explanation, quite a few managed to bring out satisfactorily the link between pluralism and democracy. This question proved to be the most difficult at this level and carried the lowest average.

Question C5:

Candidates who answered this question did quite well although there were quite a few candidates who could not even mention two leisure opportunities. Some candidates restricted leisure to going out with friends and chatting on the net. However, there were many who referred to sports, voluntary organisations and even courses related to different interests. Some candidates did not understand the question and referred to education and work opportunities rather than to leisure activities. Regarding the disadvantages, many candidates referred to the fact that they cannot drink alcohol, smoke, drive, work and go to bars, things which one cannot really call disadvantages although they may be so perceived by them. However, there were those who referred to the fact that they have no vote or that they may be abused by employers or that they may be enticed by friends to take drugs. Regarding crises and opportunities, most answers could have been better and deeper: candidates did not refer to psychological and physical changes, the stress associated with study and deciding what to do in the future. Many referred to educational opportunities and to opportunities to go and study abroad. However, most answers were brief and very general.

Question C6:

Although this was not a popular question, most candidates could define 'welfare state'. A few candidates mixed up the term with 'social status' since the Maltese equivalent for the term was given as 'stat soċjali'. Many candidates could not identify two other welfare providers but many mentioned specific organisations such as Caritas and Aġenzija Appoġġ. Most candidates could identify those at the bottom of the social structure and referred to vulnerable groups such as single mothers, the unemployed, persons with disability and old people. Some also referred to the need to integrate such groups in society. The last section was not clear to most candidates

who, rather than referring to the creation of opportunities, social justice, equality, social integration, overcoming poverty traps, social solidarity and similar measures as ways of improving the life of those at the bottom of the social structure, referred instead to specific welfare programmes or social benefits provided by the state.

Question D7:

Many candidates could define 'consumption' and linked it to purchasing and using resources. Many could link consumption to the production of waste and environmental harm, although many linked consumption to water and electricity more than to purchasing items. A few candidates referred to buying imported products or products with a lot of packaging and also to buying products when they are not actually needed. Regarding raising awareness about sustainable consumption, again many candidates linked consumption to waste of electricity and water and to environmental issues in general rather than to more sustainable consumption such as preferring to buy local products to foreign products when they are in season, avoiding heavy packaging, avoiding products involving child labour, and opting for fair trade products.

Question D8:

This proved to be the most popular question also carrying the highest average mark. Most candidates produced adequate answers. Candidates could identify types and sources of pollution although some unfortunately were unable to distinguish between 'types' and 'sources' of pollution. The discussion about the sources could have been more scientific in the sense that most candidates restricted the discussion to dirt, garbage and the harms to health caused by factories and cars. However, some candidates did refer to concepts such as acid rain, carbon dioxide and other dangerous gases, the green house effect and CFCs, and harm to the ozone layer. Most candidates could mention quite a number of ways in which we as a society could reduce environmental pollution and consequently health hazards.

**Chairperson
Markers' Panel - 2012**