Part 1: Statistical Information

1.1 The total number of candidates who registered for Social Studies for the May 2017 Session was 735. 492 opting for Paper IIA and 243 opting for Paper IIB. There were 21 absent from the Paper IIA group and 41 absent from the Paper IIB group.

1.2 Table 1 below shows the distribution of grades for this session of the examination:

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<th>GRADE</th>
<th>1</th>
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<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
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<tr>
<td>PAPER A</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>492</td>
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<td>PAPER B</td>
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<td>39</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>54</td>
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<td>TOTAL</td>
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<td>53</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>157</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>159</td>
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| % OF TOTAL | 3.3 | 7.2 | 13.3 | 21.4 | 16.2 | 5.3 | 3.3 | 21.6 | 8.4 | 100.0 |

Table 1: Distribution of Grades for Social Studies SEC May 2017

Part 2: General Comments regarding Candidates’ Performance

2.1 It appears that there are candidates who still find difficulty to define certain key concepts and terms and to elaborate on certain aspects of the syllabus. A regular weakness is the tendency to generalise and to build up answers on personal experience, gossip, common sense knowledge and knowledge resulting from media information rather than from reading, research and intelligent observation. However, it was noted with some satisfaction that there was a notable improvement in presentation and the candidates’ attempt to develop logical, coherent and purposeful discussion or description of a topic in an extended-written form particularly where candidates opting for Paper 2A are concerned.

2.2 Candidates need to skip a line between one question and another, clearly indicate the Section and the question number, write good sentences and coherent paragraphs in a legible handwriting and avoid an “sms style” of writing. Moreover, such candidates need to understand that they have to read through each question before starting to write down their answers.

2.3 Markers have, however, noted that there was a marked improvement and that a few candidates from those opting for Paper 2A, excelled in the way they addressed the questions, using sociological arguments and concepts. They give the impression that basic Social Studies concepts and processes are being mastered and that the meaning of the Syllabus content is being grasped. These give evidence of explanation and discussion skills. However, when it comes to many candidates opting for Paper 2B, there is still much to be desired where the Syllabus content is concerned.
Part 3: Specific Comments on Paper I

3.A0 Section A

3.A1 Definitions:
3.A1 (b) Social Control: there were quite a few who produced a good definition but there were some candidates who tended to struggle somewhat to adequately define the term.
3.A1 (c) Sect: many candidates could not give an adequate definition and indicate that they do not have a clear idea of what it means. For quite a few it just means ‘people who are different’.
3.A1 (d) Religious diversity: many candidates produced an adequate definition but there were many who mixed up the term with ‘religious freedom’.
3.A1 (e) Religious freedom: many gave an adequate definition but again there were candidates who mixed up the term with ‘religious diversity’.

3.A2
3.A2 (a) Candidates generally provided a satisfactory explanation regarding functions performed by religion both for individuals and for society.
3.A2 (b) Many candidates, however, generally struggled to indicate examples of other functions not mentioned in the passage. Some just copied sentences from the text or repeated what they had written for 2 (a).

3.A3 Most of the answered given were generally quite satisfactory regarding the term ‘sacred’. Candidates also gave good examples of things, objects, places and events which are considered sacred. Although candidates could give examples in any religion of their choice, the overwhelming majority indicated examples from their Catholic environment.

3.A4 Many candidates had some difficulty in providing an adequate answer to explain ‘new religious movements’. Few demonstrated sufficient knowledge on new religious movements and as a result answers were often weak and often steered well off course. They could give any good example of such movements and often mixed them up with sects.

3.A5 Candidates were expected to write a paragraph on ‘how secularisation is reflected in a number of contemporary social trends’. Though there were some candidates who seem to have had no idea of what ‘contemporary social trends’ mean, many answers indicate sufficient understanding of ‘secularisation’ – a key sociological concept. Quite often, the exemplification provided was also quite up to task, thereby indicating an ability to go beyond adequate definition and to venture toward application and some level of sociological abstraction.

3.B0 Section B

3.B1 Definitions:
3.B1 (a) Demographic trends: Many candidates limited their answer to defining the term ‘demography’ and give the impression that they have no knowledge of the meaning of the word ‘trends’.
3.B1 (b) Ageing Policy: Many candidates failed to provide a good answer because they did not understand the word ‘policy’ which they mixed up with ‘politics’. Quite a few just copied some sentences from the text to formulate their answer.
3.B1 (c) Welfare Services: Many candidates provided an adequate definition and supported their answer with some examples.

3.B2 Candidates were expected to identify three social consequences of the ‘falling levels of the working age population’. Candidates found this question rather difficult and often veered totally out of
point. Some candidates linked a weak economy leading to increased unemployment and social benefits and also loss of revenue.

3.B3 Candidates were expected to explain briefly why the old age group in the Maltese population has increased in the last decades. Many answered this straightforward question correctly and for the main offered cogent exemplification on factors leading to increases in the old age group in the Maltese population (declining birth rate, post-war baby boom, improvement in nutrition, better health care, technological and medical treatment breakthroughs, more adequate work-life balance, better living standards, long-term care, etc). However, some candidates provided unexpected twists indicating that they have a very vague understanding of time.

3.B4 Candidates were expected to describe briefly contemporary policy measures in Maltese society aimed at promoting more independent living for the elderly. Quite a few provided a good answer indicating various measures to encourage independent living. These included Telecare, Meals on Wheels, Special rates for Transport, Pensions, etc. However, once again some candidates indicated their lack of vocabulary knowledge as they mixed up ‘policy’ with ‘politics’ and referred to old people’s right to vote, coffee mornings and attendance at mass meetings, reflecting on the general election atmosphere.

3.B5 Candidates were expected to write a paragraph to discuss how elderly persons can remain active in the community so as to overcome experiences of material and social exclusion and remain integrated in society. Many candidates misconstrued measures at encouraging and promoting more independent living with the content of this question and there were some who simply rephrased the question without developing their answer. Few candidates focused on the retained community involvement of the elderly and addressed the question unsatisfactorily.

Part 4: Specific comments on Paper 2A

Section I: The Individual and Society

4.1 Question 1: This was a popular question where candidates often gave a good explanation of the meaning of social differentiation. Many gave relevant examples from personal experience. These included references to gender inequalities, LGBTIQ issues, different religions and people of different skin colour. There were candidates who referred to conflict in terms of partisan politics, historical events or regional conflicts. Others referred to different opinions about football, deviating from the issue at hand. However, very few candidates could discuss conflict beyond disagreements or discrimination although there were those who referred to such issues as multiculturalism and globalisation. Only a few candidates referred to issues such as protest or civil rights movements, pressure groups, integration policies or equality legislation.

4.2 Question 2: Many candidates began answering this question by distinguishing between primary and secondary agents of socialization. Candidates managed to show links between agents of secondary socialization and social control, while not a few mentioned the role of social control and negative sanctions as a consequence of social deviant actions and behaviour. There were candidates who indicated agents of secondary socialization and discussed how these transmit values and teach members of society to distinguish between right and wrong, thus linking it simplistically to social control. Candidates also distinguished between vertical and horizontal agents of socialization although some focused only on one agent especially education or the media. Moreover, there were candidates who gave more importance to examples than to concepts, referring for example to how friends or peers may lead young people to vices but that good friends can be a good example.
Section II: Social Institutions

4.3 Question 3: This was also a popular question which elicited quite a significant number of good essays. Candidates could refer to how the family changed in terms of size and composition referring to extended and nuclear families. As often happens with such questions, candidates tend to attempt to define family rather than to introduce the topic of change. There were candidates who actually only gave definitions from beginning to end, eg. of the extended family, the nuclear family, step families, single parent families and so on rather than blending these into the discussion. However, many candidates mentioned a number of issues in relation to change such as secularisation, the changing role of women, family breakdown, divorce, separation and family diversity, some of which were linked to trends in marital breakdown. Other factors mentioned included reference to recent legislation on marriage, double-earner families and the introduction of IVF for problems of infertility, within the perspective of social change and its effects on the family in Malta.

4.4 Question 4: A good number of candidates answered the question regarding the main causes of unemployment and the consequences that it may have on individuals and families. The majority of candidates linked unemployment to micro rather than macro elements such as laziness, lack of education and disability. Less reference was made to structural factors causing unemployment although a few did refer to company closure and economic recessions. Many candidates gave various examples of causes of unemployment, ranging from closing down or relocation of big companies to reduction in the number of workers because of the introduction of computers to lack of proper education and technical skills. There were candidates who dealt diligently with the social aspect of unemployment and sought to discuss the effects of unemployment on the national economy owing to, among other factors, decrease in labour skills, stress, and stress on the welfare system leading to unsustainable welfare. Few made reference to mental and psychological problems, loss of identity and to a sense of uselessness or stigma although some did refer to other consequences which could be linked to unemployment such as poor health and nutrition. However, there were some who referred to unemployment as a major problem, hardly reflecting the current social realities.

Section III: Social Issues

4.5 Question 5: Candidates were expected to comment on women’s role in Maltese politics. Most candidates provided valid arguments about the high presence of male candidates against the number of female candidates in local politics. Candidates managed to provide a good comparison between the past and present situation regarding rights of women in politics. However, the majority failed to emphasize the fact that female representation in parliament is still quite limited. A few noted that Malta has a woman as President and that government has over the years introduced a number of incentives to support women in their careers. Hardly any candidate mentioned the different roles women occupy within the political scene other than having a seat in parliament. Very few candidates pointed out that Malta has the lowest representation in parliament among the EU member states, that more women are so far likely to contest the local council elections and be elected and that a number of Maltese women have been elected to represent Malta in the European Parliament. Many candidates treated this question as if it deals with gender discrimination quoting that women were expected to stay at home and run a family. Few candidates referred to the increased opportunities of secondary and tertiary education which has empowered many to participate in public life or pointed out that although more female students were graduating from University, few ventured to participate in politics. Some did argue that this was perhaps as a result of a negative perception of politics and politicians.

4.6 Question 6: The candidates who attempted this question, gave various examples and interpretations of social exclusion. Though some explanations given were valid, and some candidates indicated that they were well prepared and could mention various forms of social exclusion, some mixed up social exclusion with discrimination or injustice. Regarding the second part of the question, where candidates were expected to give examples from the Maltese experience, many candidates
completely ignored this part of the question. They based their arguments on what was the case hundreds of years ago and completely ignored the changes that have taken place over the years and have impacted contemporary Maltese society.

Section IV: Development and Change

4.7 Question 7: The problem with this question was that though candidates showed that they are familiar with the topic ‘land development’, several candidates completely ignored the fact that the answer had to focus on public discussions on ‘environmental issues’ that often arise about the issue. Some candidates wrote about environmental issues which have nothing to do with land development, eg. recycling of waste. This notwithstanding, a number of candidates presented valid arguments for and against land development. Such candidates pointed to reasons that have brought about the need of development however some of their arguments were rather weak. The way development affects people’s lives, health and the destruction of the natural habitat were the main arguments brought about on the issue. Very few made any reference to developers or speculators or the consequences of development. Moreover, it appears that a good number of candidates are not aware of what various environmentalist pressure groups are doing regarding the issue, of environmental impact assessments (EIA) or of the role and function of the Planning Authority and the Environmental and Resources Authority.

4.8 Question 8: Most candidates showed that they have a good knowledge about urbanisation and its effects on society, though there were a few who gave quite a novel definition – eg. ‘the chewing of land to make space for buildings and infrastructure’ or ‘the use of virgin land to extend villages’. There were a few who confused it with overpopulation and focused on demographic development. Regarding effects of urbanisation on society, many candidates referred to positive and negative effects such as more employment opportunities, educational centres, health facilities, administrative services, recreational and entertainment centres, pollution and traffic congestion, waste problem, lack of open recreational areas, health problems including depression and anxiety, etc. With regard to examples in Maltese society, there were candidates who referred to the rate of mobility to the capital city as a centre for administrative and commercial services, the problem of traffic congestion and parking, the demand for housing accommodation, the development of new towns and residential areas, the development of large shopping centres and supermarkets, greater presence of foreigners, and the pull factor of investors and consumers.

Part 5: Specific comments on Paper 2B

Section I: The Individual and Society

5.1 Question 1:

5.1 (a) Quite a few candidates were able to explain correctly the term ‘social mobility’ although a few did not link it directly to social stratification but to work or a vague social position.

5.1 (b) Several candidates managed to give a good explanation of the difference between ‘vertical’ and ‘horizontal’ social mobility with relevant examples for each term. However, there were instances where candidates gave a good definition but then gave examples which do not reflect the definition.

5.1 (c) Regarding the factors that may lead to social mobility, only a few candidates identified factors likely to lead to both vertical and horizontal mobility. Some candidates assumed that getting a pay rise means that one is vertically mobile. Candidates did not always bring out the difference between changing jobs resulting in horizontal mobility and moving from one level to a higher level resulting in vertical mobility. Many candidates could mention a few issues which may lead to social mobility such as education, improvement of skills, marrying someone from a different class or inheritance. However, overall the discussions were simplistic.
5.2 Question 2:
5.2 (a): A significant number of candidates produced an acceptable definition of ‘cultural diversity’ with several of them identifying examples of factors that may lead to cultural diversity and linked it well to the existence of different ethnic groups. There were some who took cultural diversity to mean different aspects of Maltese culture such as feasts and traditional Maltese food.

5.2 (b): Regarding two factors that may lead to cultural diversity in a society, the two main factors identified were the movement of legal or illegal migrants and tourism. However, media and globalisation were also mentioned. Some candidates mentioned Malta’s booming economy as the reason which is attracting people from other countries to Malta.

5.2 (c): Among the effects of cultural diversity on society, candidates mentioned advantages like learning from other people’s customs and traditions, experiencing varieties of food and costumes, appreciating cultural music and learning to live together even though people are different. Among negative effects, intolerance, discrimination and conflict were often mentioned. The fear that different foreign minority groups may take over or destroy the ‘dominant or traditional culture’ of the guest country was also brought up by a number of candidates.

Section II: Social Institutions

5.3 Question 3:
5.3 (a) Most candidates identified correctly three ways in which work can affect people in their everyday lives. Among the effects mentioned were earning money and being able to live decently, building social relationships, learning from work experience, having a healthy routine, stress, not having time for oneself or to spend with the family, not being paid well for the work one does and therefore hinting at exploitation by employers.

5.3 (b) Though the vast majority of the candidates could give examples of negative effects that unemployment can have on an individual, many restricted their answers to economic and psychological factors in the sense of not being able to sustain oneself and one’s family, not being able to afford certain things and being negatively affected mentally. Here many mentioned stress and falling into a depression as a consequence. A few candidates referred to more extreme cases such as committing suicide or illness or death. A few mentioned lack of routine, not having a purpose in life and laziness.

5.3 (c): Though candidates generally emphasized that many people experience discrimination on grounds of age, gender, ethnicity and disability in the labour market, many gave simplistic answers. Many tended to repeat the same idea throughout in relation to the different variables, that is that the worker can be discriminated and can suffer the consequences as a result, e.g a person may not be employed because of old age or disability or because employers prefer to employ a person without any disability. Only a few candidates raised different arguments such as sexual harassment, the gender gap or the law that demands employers to have a percentage of people with disability in large companies.

5.4 Question 4:
5.4 (a): Candidates had to give three reasons to explain why education is considered to be a basic human right. A significant number of candidates gave good examples of the importance of education, even though they did not always hint at how and why education is a basic right. There were candidates who mentioned that it is basic to other human rights and that it contributes to the full development of the human person. It is through the access to education that the right of access to jobs and to live decently is achieved.
5.4 (b): Many candidates could distinguish vaguely between ‘education’ and ‘learning’, linking education to institutions and learning to something one does not necessarily with the help of institutions. However, the definitions were generally not clear and not well differentiated.

5.4 (c): The majority of candidates indicated that they have no idea what ‘inclusive education’ means. This is surprising especially considering that nowadays schools have become more inclusive in terms of gender and disability as well as more multi-cultural than they were in the past. Very few gave an acceptable explanation of the term.

5.4 (d): A number of candidates showed that they are not aware of and do not know anything about the advantages of studying abroad. Among the reasons given there were: new experience, the possibility of learning foreign languages, better opportunities of being employed, learning about other countries, meeting others, greater access to libraries, development of decision taking skills, maturity and getting used to living independently. Some also referred to more choice of careers and better resources. A few candidates indicated that they believe that education abroad is superior to local education arguing that they have better teachers and educational institutions.

Section III: Social Issues

5.5: Question 5:
5.5 (a): Only a few candidates could define and explain correctly the meaning of ‘the lowest employment rate’. Hardly any candidate mentioned that it is a percentage of those who do not form part of the workforce.

5.5 (b): On the other hand, a good number of candidates provided good examples to indicate three factors leading to low female participation in employment. The most factors indicated included priority of obligations, lack of work experience and qualifications by a certain age group, discrimination in female wages and work conditions and lack of family friendly measures.

5.5 (c): Regarding measures being taken in Malta to raise female participation in employment, many candidates tended to focus on only one measure. Several candidates could mention measures being taken by different entities to raise female employment and some even with fairly detailed description of the measures. References were made to equal pay for equal work, the introduction of teleworking, and the elimination of gender discrimination in opportunities for promotions.

5.6: Question 6:
5.6(a): A significant number of candidates could not identify the forms of poverty – relative, absolute, material and social – though there were others who gave a clear explanation of these forms.

5.6(b): Most candidates could identify and describe satisfactorily two effects of poverty on society, however, some candidates lack the ability to draw their answers from related study material and instead tended to generalize and draw on personal experience. Some referred to an increase in the number of families at risk of social exclusion, to the possibility of an increase in criminality, the rise in number of single mothers and others resorting to prostitution and rarely the possibility of an unsustainable welfare system.

5.6(c): Candidates were expected to write a paragraph about how society is combating the effects of poverty. Though not all candidates could write a good explanatory paragraph, there were candidates who referred to such effects as encouraging the unemployed to participate in lifelong educational programmes, providing family friendly measures to encourage more female employment, creating more employment opportunities by public and private entities, providing an increase in the annual cost
of living allowance and raising the minimum wage and exempting low income workers from income tax.

Section IV: Development and Change

5.7: Question 7:
5.7(a): Though some candidates defined ‘birth rate’ correctly, many defined it as the rate of the number of births within a specific time without explaining how it is calculated, that is the number of live births per 1000 population or mean number of births per marriage. On the other hand, few could define ‘population mobility’ correctly. There were candidates who interpreted population mobility as the ability of able bodied persons to move physically. Others confused it up with population increase due to longer life expectancy.

5.7(b): There were candidates who failed completely to identify three factors which are contributing to population mobility. However, there were some who indicated such factors as more work opportunities and the growth of the tourism industry. A few others pointed to better life conditions and the desire to change residence as possible factors.

5.7(c): Most candidates were able to give a satisfactory explanation of the effects of declining birth rates on the population. Most often, candidates referred to the increasing number of smaller families and households, the increasing ageing population, the loss of income revenue, the increase in number of working age persons with loss of employment rate, and the problem of the welfare gap resulting in an unsustainable welfare system.

5.8: Question 8:
5.8(a): Only a few candidates could give a satisfactory explanation of what is meant by ‘quality of life of the population’. Those who did, generally referred to health and education as conditions that positively provide for a good quality of life. Some others sought to substantiate their answer by providing examples and comparing past and present situations.

5.8(b): Regarding the process of urban sprawl, many candidates could give acceptable reasons to explain what brings about urban sprawl as the constant process of expansion of residential areas joining towns and nearby villages together, but only just a few candidates provided examples of such a process in Malta. Furthermore, it seems that there were candidates who assumed that examples from Gozo could not be included.

5.8(c): Most candidates could identify and comment on the advantages and disadvantages of urbanisation. Among the disadvantages or negative aspects of urbanisation, there were candidates who referred to an increase in population density in limited areas, pollution, traffic and parking problems, mental health problems, loneliness, youth deviancy and criminality. Regarding advantages, candidates referred to more work opportunities, the availability of more commodities, better transport facilities, more educational facilities, places of entertainment and shopping centres.

Chairperson
Examiners’ Panel 2017