

**UNIVERSITY OF MALTA**

**SECONDARY EDUCATION CERTIFICATE  
SEC**

**SOCIAL STUDIES  
MAY 2014**

**EXAMINERS' REPORT**

**MATRICULATION AND SECONDARY EDUCATION  
CERTIFICATE EXAMINATIONS BOARD**

**SEC Social Studies  
May 2014 Session  
Examiners' Report**

**Part 1: STATISTICAL INFORMATION**

Table 1 shows the distribution of grades for the May 2014 session of the examination.

<b>GRADE</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>U</b>	<b>ABS</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
<b>PAPER A</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>112</b>	<b>193</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>246</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>719</b>
<b>PAPER B</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>168</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>229</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>681</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>199</b>	<b>361</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>475</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>1400</b>
<b>% OF TOTAL</b>	<b>0.7</b>	<b>3.8</b>	<b>5.7</b>	<b>14.2</b>	<b>25.8</b>	<b>6.4</b>	<b>3.9</b>	<b>33.9</b>	<b>5.6</b>	<b>100</b>

**Part 2: Comments regarding candidate's performance****2.1 GENERAL COMMENTS****2.2 General Comments on Paper 1**

1. As noted in previous examiners' reports, a sizeable part of the candidates sitting for this examination demonstrated familiarisation with the related study materials and some level of knowledge on the syllabus topics. For the main, however, candidates tended to rely on simple regurgitation of the related study materials and rarely engaged with the subject matter at hand critically and with the requisite reflection prior to putting pen to paper. In several instances, candidates thus failed to interpret the subject matter at hand effectively and also often ignored the instructions accompanying the examination questions.
2. The candidates' ability to effectively define key concepts and to elaborate upon them with the requisite exemplification was also found wanting in several instances.
3. These shortcomings were further compounded by the weak and often quite abysmal writing skills on offer in various instances. The examiners noted that there were a sizeable number of candidates who are incapable of developing lines of argumentation logically and coherently, struggle to write legible text and in a several cases, demonstrated a total lack of mastery of the fundamentals of writing and expressing themselves in English or Maltese.
4. Furthermore, several candidates failed to demonstrate a capacity for sociological abstraction and analysis and posited lines of argumentation that relied on popularistic understandings of the subject matter at hand. Candidates also struggled to make the requisite shift from pure subjective experience as the foundation for building lines of argumentation to more objective appraisal. Consequently, much of the work on offer was often vague, generic and superficial without the requisite sociological thrust and imagination.

**Specific Remarks on Paper 1**

**Section A**

1. Most candidates correctly identified the three different forms of well-being that are important for health according to the WHO, namely physical, mental and social well-being.
2. (a) Candidates wrote about the effects of industrialisation on climate, pollution, population migration and overcrowded towns but not specifically on human health. Some copied extracts from the passage or produced a historical explanation on the industrial revolution. (b) Candidates were expected to indicate and comment upon four factors, apart from industrialisation, which have an impact on people's health. Yet many stuck to giving examples related to industrialisation. Those who reflected more cogently on the examination question at stake, referred to lack of physical exercise; smoking, drugs and alcohol; unemployment; lack of socialisation; and the media. Quite often, however, the comments provided by the candidates to elaborate on such factors were rather scanty.
3. (a) Candidates had to list three examples of health services in Malta's health-care system. A good number of candidates simply noted government, private and voluntary services without giving any specific examples of health services pertaining to these domains. Others mostly indicated Mater Dei and other hospitals, pharmacies and specialised services, or included government agencies such as Sedqa and Appoġġ. Some mixed up voluntary organisations (such as Dar tal-Providenza, Community Chest Fund and St John's Ambulance Brigade) with government services. (b) In their attempt to etch the differences between public and private health services, most candidates correctly stressed that contrary to private health services, state health services are free and based on equal access for all. However, the examiners also noted that a significant number of candidates valorised private health care service more than public health services without effectively sustaining why.
4. (a) Many candidates, by and large, are quite well aware of CARITAS' work with drug addicts, however, failed to demonstrate more thorough appreciation of the myriad services that this seminal NGO provides. Some candidates also confused CARITAS with the Hospice Movement, Inspire and Puttinu. (b) Only a few candidates could describe the role and functions of MMNDNA correctly. MMDNA was repeatedly incorrectly associated with blood transfusions and DNA testing. Some candidates also misconstrued MMNDNA as a nursing service provided by insurance companies.
5. Few candidates cared to explain (in about eighty words) the basic constructs of a healthy life style. Many tended to ignore the question and focused on Question 1 to build up their answer and proceeded to use quotes from the passage accompanying this section. This said, there were candidates who stressed the importance of a healthy diet, daily exercise, and a more stress-free, and adequate work-leisure balance to ensure a good healthy life style.

**Section B:**

1. Definitions:
  - (a) Most candidates defined global culture as something common to all. Many referred to the spread of the English language as an example. Many of the answers that were provided were rather vague and several candidates confused global culture with multiculturalism.
  - (b) Though some fairly good answers were provided on this examination question, many limited their definition to co-operation between different persons or groups of persons.
  - (c) Rather weak definitions were generally given in this instance, with the exam candidates often limiting their answer to development in technology. Some referred to the movement of goods, information and people as result of different ways of communication.
  - (d) Contrary to Q1(c), most candidates defined the subject matter at stake adequately although a sizeable number of the examination candidates constrained themselves to illegal immigrants.
  - (e) Some good answers were given though candidates often limited their definition to one country selling a product to another country. Some emphasised import and export.
2. Few candidates elaborated effectively (within sixty words) on the subject at stake. Several candidates totally ignored the main thrust of the examination question and instead focused on various means of modern communication systems. Answers were often restricted to social networking as a form of socialisation. Only a small number of few candidates wrote anything about the impact of communication systems on all spheres of social life, including *inter alia* on work, education and politics.
3. It is evident that many candidates do not even know what national culture and identity imply. Answers were often limited to the threats to the Maltese language as a result of the widespread use of the English language and to the potential threat that illegal immigration and marriages to foreigners may have on social cohesion. Few candidates explained how global culture may be eroding local culture and identity or that easily available imported products may be threatening the livelihood of local producers or may be affecting the local market negatively.
4. (a) Many candidates found this question difficult to answer and struggled to define multinational companies and international trade. Some sought to explain multinational companies by giving the names of international companies or brands. Very few candidates, if any, reflected upon how multinationals originate from rich industrialized countries and often abuse and exploit the poor in third world countries. Many answers focused on competition, the transfer of goods from one country to another, the possibility of having cheaper prices and of giving an opportunity to consumers to buy different products. (b) Many candidates interpreted unfair trading as being illegal and not as practices which give advantage to certain traders over others because of their influence on the market. Fair trade, for many candidates, was equated with giving a fair wage to workers.
5. Many candidates repeated what they had written in reply to Q 4 in this instance and attributed this state of affairs to lack of education and to poverty. Some candidates did mention that these countries lack the resources to get access to global communication networks.

### **2.3 : General Comments on Paper 2A**

1. Candidates who choose to sit for this paper are expected to give focused answers and to debate and critically engage with the subject matter at hand. In spite of this, numerous candidates adopted a descriptive rather than an analytical approach in their answers and often provided very pedestrian content in the work on offer. The examiners could also note that a good number of candidates simply zoned in on a singular concept or key term in the essay titles without making any effort to connect it with what the question actually asked for. On other occasions, candidates deviated significantly from the main thrust of the question being attempted. For instance, in Question 4 (Section II), there were a significant number of candidates who dealt with the 'Internet' in general rather than with 'social networking' in their essays. Moreover, once more, the examiners observed that the candidates' proclivity for regurgitating study materials without the requisite reflection prior to putting pen to paper re-emerged in this paper.

2. The work on offer also suffered from lack of logical flow and development of argument – essential ingredients for sociological insight and often lacked in the requisite elaboration, indicating that candidates lacked the required depth of knowledge on the subject matter at hand.

### **Specific remarks on Paper 2A**

#### **Section 1**

##### Question 1:

In this question the exam candidates were asked to elaborate on how the process of socialisation is strengthened when agents of socialisation exercise some form of social control. In this case, candidates were expected to explain the processes of socialisation and social control; identify the agents of socialisation and then apply this knowledge through the use of examples to fully answer this question. While a number of candidates offered some telling insights in this regard, the majority of the candidates produced vague answers that were lacking in elaboration, articulation and analytical and focused content. The examiners also noted that the candidates' lack of engagement with current affairs also hampered their efforts to this effect. This was evident with statements such as "...recently a referendum on gay marriage was held".

##### Question 2

This examination question instructed candidates to discuss how various factors might lead to social conflict. To this effect, candidates were expected to identify factors that lead to social conflict, and to give examples to elaborate their answers. In addition, the candidates were also expected to mention examples of measures members of society take to avoid social conflict. For the main, the content on offer in the candidates' answers on Question 2 failed to zone in on the subject matter at stake and the main thrusts of this essay question. The content on offer also often lacked reference to keystone sociological frameworks on social conflict, including for example, Marxist theory.

#### **Section 2**

##### Question 3

This question requested the candidates to analyse how family relationships have changed from ones based on subordination to those based on equality between the spouses, with direct reference to examples from Maltese society. A good number of candidates succeeded in positing some insightful reflections on the subject matter at stake with the majority referring mainly to the fact that in the past the husband was the sole breadwinner and hence this automatically placed him in a powerful position within the family-unit when compared to his wife.

Some candidates also went beyond this argument and made reference to other changes that have affected family-life in Malta such as the rise of the symmetrical family; the fact that the spouses are now considered as equal partners in rights and responsibilities in the matrimonial house, the fact that both parents are responsible for the medical care of the children etc., and the amendments that took place with regard to Civil Law. In some instances however candidates deemed it fit to focus on the role and emancipation of women in society without engaging in a discussion on how women have experienced changes to their roles within the family.

#### Question 4

This question proved particularly popular with candidates, most probably because the majority felt that they could draw on their first hand experience on the subject in question, that is, social networking on the Internet. Candidates, however, often deviated from the main thrust of this essay question and dwelled upon the advantages and disadvantages of the 'Internet' in general and not on 'social networks', as requisite. A number of candidates made generic and sweeping statements such as: '*Youth can't live without the Internet*' or '*Social networking is a miracle*' or '*Now people have opened their mind*' or '*The internet does the work for us*' or '*The internet introduces you to bad people*', without at least sustaining such statements or elaborating on them further.

### Section 3

#### Question 5

This examination question required candidates to focus on how local and international organisations are providing social and economic support to women in an effort to ensure equality between the sexes, with specific reference to the local scenario. The candidates that sought to address this question (fewer when compared to the larger amount of candidates that attempted Question 6 in Section 3) often struggled to grapple with the main thrusts of this essay question and provided content that deviated from the subject matter at stake, indicating that candidates failed to effect the requisite reflection on the examination question prior to putting pen to paper. Consequently, in many instances, the Candidates' work veered out of point.

#### Question 6:

This question also proved popular with candidates and was the preferred choice in Section 3. Q6 instructed candidates to debate and discuss the influence of mass media on young people. Contrary to the above, a good number of candidates interpreted the subject matter at hand correctly and in some instances provided some telling insights and cogent exemplification on the task at hand. In a number of cases, however, candidates failed to make effective use of the related subject matter and to demonstrate the requisite depth of knowledge on the topic. It is evident that candidates require more serious study in their preparation for this examination.

### Section 4:

#### Question 7:

Q7 instructed exam candidates to focus and elaborate on the factors that are causing global warming and to critically appraise efforts that are being made to control it. This question also proved popular with candidates and the content on offer, for the main, demonstrated that candidates are somewhat familiar with the rudiments of the subject matter. While this demonstrated the candidates' awareness on important environmental issues and the need to constrain global warming, more use of the study materials and the substantiation of lines of argumentation with thorough and cogent exemplification was required in various instances, further resonating the need for more taxing preparation across the board for this examination.

Question 8:

This examination question tested the candidates' understanding and depth of knowledge on urbanisation and how this process has affected the social, economic and environmental aspects of developed countries. As noted in various instances above, in many cases the work on offer in this case was also hampered by lack of application of the related study materials, weak exemplification and an inability to reflect upon the subject matter at hand from a sociological and analytical perspective.

**2.4 General Comments on Paper 2B**

1. As in previous years, students do not portray a thorough knowledge of basic Social Studies concepts encountered in the Syllabus. This is reflected in the lack of social scientific content in many responses. There is recurring evidence that students, in their majority, are answering examination questions based largely on their everyday life experiences and social encounters. A sound understanding of Social Studies concepts is lacking and the vocabulary employed is drawn from everyday common parlance. While reference to life experience is not to be discouraged, it should be used to highlight or illustrate concepts rather than to replace them.

2. Many candidates are unable to apply concepts to practical and real situations or to give clear definitions. It is unfortunate that many candidates do not seem to be able to link social facts or processes with their effects on society. Many candidates tend to produce stereotyped or superficial answers without even attempting to understand the set questions and without seeking to apply reflective and analytical skills. One is led to believe, then, that quite a few students are approaching the examination in this subject with a mentality that anything goes for Social Studies; that one can sit for the Social Studies paper and simply draw from commonsense knowledge.

3. As a general rule, candidates are opting for short answers regardless of the marks allotted to questions. There are questions which require an extended piece of writing in order to draw out clearly what is being explained. A case in point is the third part of each question which tends to ask for a paragraph and which carries the highest weighting in marks, but which is still frequently being tackled in short answer form. As in previous years, candidates tend to ignore the number of marks allotted to a question. It is not uncommon for candidates to write longer and more detailed answers for questions allotted a few marks and shorter and less detailed answers for questions allotted 10 to 15 marks. Good marks are consequently being lost due to lack of attention. There was also a significant number of candidates who attempted all the questions without paying attention to the instructions set out in the paper.

4. As in previous years, and as already underscored in this report, language use generally leaves much to be desired. While the focus of examiners is largely on the Social Studies content, it has to be noted that a large number of responses, the vast majority of which (in respect of this paper) are written in Maltese, portray extremely poor language skills. This is largely, but not exclusively, reflected in the spelling of a number of words in any particular sentence or to the use of inadequate vocabulary e.g. the ubiquitous use of the word "polluzzjoni" instead of trniggiż.

## Specific remarks regarding Paper 2B

### Section 1

#### Question 1

(a) This was a very popular question with candidates. Most candidates gave a generally adequate explanation of the term 'social behaviour' referring for example to "the attitude of a person in society, acting according to the norms and values of that particular society". Many candidates also gave acceptable examples such as helping others, socialising with friends or more general examples such as social behaviour in the family, at school and at work.

(b) Very few candidates could explain the meaning of civil society. Some candidates interpreted the word civil as civilised, well-mannered, where people respect the norms and values of society and where conflict is kept at a minimum and everybody's rights are respected. Some even made reference to civil union legislation. Consequently, few students could give correct examples of civil society organisations although some did mention organisations such as CARITAS but only because they had welfare organisations in mind. Others mentioned government entities such as local councils, the law courts, the police, the army as well as social support structures such as Sedqa and Appoġġ.

(c) Many candidates are aware of the benefits of participation in the community and several gave good examples of how one can participate in the community to one's own benefit and that of others. Benefits of community participation mentioned by the majority of students centred on activities like participating in marathons, clean-up campaigns or local village activities. Personal and social benefits like better communication and interaction skills, consolidating citizenship values and attitudes were given less importance.

#### Question 2

(a) Most students could define the concept of 'social mobility' although this was largely explained through concrete examples rather than conceptually e.g. social mobility is experienced when a person is promoted at work. However many showed a satisfactory understanding of the concept and referred to examples of both downward and upward mobility. A few answers mixed up social mobility with social stratification, particularly the three-class structure and referred to class membership rather than to mobility.

(b) Few candidates could identify downward and upward mobility conceptually while some referred to horizontal and vertical mobility. In many cases 'types' of social mobility were interchanged with 'factors' leading to it and the distinction was very often shown through examples rather than through a conceptual definition.

(c) This section was more or less adequately answered by many candidates. Various factors that lead to social mobility were mentioned, the most frequently mentioned factors being success in business and better educational opportunities as well as promotions at work. Reference was made to both examples of downward and upward mobility in most cases. Those who confused stratification with mobility referred to factors such as power and wealth in this section.

## Section 2

### Question 3

(a) Although this question was chosen by the vast majority of students, responses to this part of the question show that candidates do not have a clear idea of what formal and non-formal education are all about. There were candidates who mixed up the two terms, associating informal rather than formal education with schools. Thus certain candidates explained formal education as that which is learned in the family, while others mixed it up with primary socialisation. While a number of candidates could distinguish between formal and non-formal education, linking formal education to that received at school, hardly any reference was made to any official education program of study, to the national curriculum, school syllabuses and formative and summative assessments of students. When the link between formal education and schools was made, it was largely restricted to schools and no reference to other educational institutions or other sources and forms of education was made.

Non-formal education was at times misconstrued as secondary socialisation. Furthermore, those candidates who could define non-formal education tended to restrict the context to the family and sometimes to friends. Little reference was made to the numerous other sources or contexts of non-formal or informal education. There was surprisingly hardly any reference to media sources for example in an age where young people spend most of their time engaging with different media forms.

It is of concern that the distinction between formal and non-formal and informal education is not clear for many candidates especially today when non-formal and informal education are being assessed and accredited together with formal content at both local and European level.

(b) Many candidates are quite familiar with the concepts of roles, rights and responsibilities which were explained adequately by the majority of respondents. However, certain candidates did not distinguish clearly between roles and responsibilities. Roles were often defined as that which we are supposed to do. Furthermore, responsibilities were conceived by the majority of candidates as being responsible for something or someone as in having to take care of something or someone for a specific time e.g. taking care of younger siblings. The concept of responsibility was thus restricted although not irrelevant. Many candidates provided adequate examples of the three concepts although the examples given were often not strictly related to family life as expected by point (ii) of the question.

(c) While this question does not seem to follow naturally from the previous two parts, many answers suggested that candidates found it difficult to make the connection between education and family life. In fact, very vague, superficial and cliché' remarks were made on the benefits of education. Connection between education and family life was restricted to how parents can help their children with homework or with how education helps members of the family support each other better, understand each other better and cooperate amongst themselves.

### Question 4

This question was chosen by so very few candidates that it is difficult for the examiners to make an evaluation of the responses. It is not clear why candidates did not choose this question. It could suggest that candidates were more familiar with the topic in question or that they considered question 4 to be difficult or unclear. It may suggest that the topic was not discussed in detail in class. From the scattered responses to this question, there were a few relevant points identified or mentioned by the candidates while a few others were completely inadequate or off the mark.

### Section 3

#### Question 5

(a) Most candidates were unable to distinguish clearly between 'sex' as a biological construct and 'gender' as a social concept. While quite a few candidates associated sex with being male or female, most candidates stopped there. Many showed lack of understanding of the concept of gender. There was some reference to gender as sexual orientation while hardly any reference was made to gender identification or to gender stereotypes and the social expectations attached to them. Considering the present political context, there were a few scattered references to the idea that one's conception of gender identity or one's sexual makeup may change.

(b) Most candidates did not address this question well enough. While some candidates mentioned that there has been progress in terms of gender equality in the world of work, many did not discuss how there can still be forms of inequality between men and women in this sphere. The responses which were related to the question mainly mentioned why men may be given preference over women when employers choose employees or why men may earn more than women. Once again, responses were based more on examples rather than on concepts.

(c) Very few respondents could mention examples of civil organisations in Malta which militate in favour of gender equality. Among those mentioned were The National Commission for the Promotion of Equality and the Commission of Women in Business together with the National Council of women. However, those candidates who made reference to these organisations were few and far between. Furthermore, most candidates could not adequately link specific organisations with the work they do in the field of gender equality and women's rights. Most answers were vague and very general for example referring to feminism or to social welfare services. Some candidates even mentioned trade unions as providing such support or services.

#### Question 6

(a) This question on youth and adolescence was, as expected, popular with respondents. It is also a type of question where students tend to reply from personal experience rather than through reference to sociological concepts. Certain candidates tended to disregard the emphasis on social changes, making reference to physical and psychological changes which are experienced with the onset of adolescence. From the responses it was evident that many candidates were less familiar with the concept of adolescence than with the concept of youth, some assuming that adolescence comes after youth.

However there were also references to changes at the social level such as being held more responsible by society, by family, school and youth organisations; as being more autonomous and not wanting anyone to interfere with their choices; as being able to understand social expectations better; as being in a better position to understand society's cultural norms, values and traditions and being able to participate more fully in society; that as youth and adolescents they have more rights, that they can participate in local elections; that they start thinking of a career and preparing themselves for it. Candidates also mentioned the challenges and negative influences encountered such as alcohol, drugs and pornography.

(b) Most candidates answered this part of the question satisfactorily making reference to the benefits of participating in youth movements and voluntary organisations such as being able to express their ideas, having the opportunity to learn to cooperate with others, to give a contribution to society without getting paid, helping others in need, learning to consolidate society's norms and values, having a social life and keeping away from vice.

(c) It is obvious that candidates could draw from their personal experience to answer this part of the question, technology being very much part of the candidates' life. The candidates' familiarity with computers and the internet can be seen from the way they expressed themselves. However, many candidates tended to focus more on the advantages and disadvantages of using computer technology rather than on why computer technology has tended to become the most dominant form of communication as implied in the question.

Candidates acknowledged both the positive and the negative aspects of these means of communication. Among the arguments that were mentioned, one could find that whilst computer and internet make it easier to communicate being very fast, cheap and efficient, they do not leave space for physical contact and interpersonal communication. Many mentioned that young people prefer to stay home and chat with their friends rather than go out to meet them. Computer technology helps them make new friends from near and far but at the same time they have become addicted to it and cannot imagine life without it. It was also pointed out that besides being used for chatting with friends the internet is used for many other things such as research. Computers and the internet have changed the culture of how we communicate, how we conduct business, how we spend our leisure time. All in all they have a great impact on our lives.

#### **Section 4**

##### **Question 7 (a)**

While most candidates have a good conception of the term global warming, candidates could not always give a complete definition referring vaguely to environmental destruction or to pollution. Some candidates tended to mix up global warming with the damage to the ozone layer.

(b) While many candidates could mention human activities which lead to global warming, the distinction between human activities which contribute to global warming (7b) and measures to control it (7c) was not clear in some of the answers. Some candidates confused the two and referred to human activity which seeks to counteract global warming in both (b) and (c). Most candidates could make the connection between the burning of fossil fuels and the greenhouse effect and global warming although most answers were restricted to the burning of fuels by cars and factories. Less reference was made to deforestation and certain agricultural activities as human activities that are contributing towards global warming.

(c) Most candidates are aware of the efforts being made and which need to be made to control global warming. Reference was made by many candidates to the use of alternative energy sources, to the need to reduce, reuse and recycle waste, to the need to control pollution by using public transport, walking or resorting to electric cars and so on.

##### **Question 8 (a)**

Many candidates could not give a good definition of urbanisation. The process of urbanisation was interchanged with that of industrialisation while some mixed up urbanisation with immigration with the usual misguided concerns attached to it and evident in part (c). Others viewed urbanisation simply as the building up of green areas and the destruction of the countryside.

(b) A significant number of respondents gave an acceptable definition of 'population density' although the concept was often mixed up with population growth or demographic changes. Very few made reference to the problem of population density we experience in Malta.

(c) A significant number managed to mention relevant examples of problems resulting from urbanisation. Traffic congestion, pollution and lack of parking spaces were considered as the most pressing problems of urbanisation. Noise pollution, destruction of green areas and housing problems were also mentioned together with competition for jobs and the potential for conflict. Those whose conception of urbanisation was mixed up with migration or industrialisation also managed to make a few relevant remarks due to some overlap although some answers were consequently off at a tangent.

**Chairperson  
Examiners' Panel - 2014**