UNIVERSITY OF MALTA

**THE MATRICULATION EXAMINATION
SEC LEVEL**

SOCIAL STUDIES

MAY 2013

EXAMINERS' REPORT

**MATRICULATION AND SECONDARY EDUCATION
CERTIFICATE EXAMINATIONS BOARD**

1.0 Statistical Information

1.1 The total number of candidates who registered for this examination was 1544 or 120 less than the previous year: 762 registered for Option A while another 762 registered for Option B. Of these 15 Option A candidates were absent for both sessions of the examination while 40 Option B candidates were absent for both sessions of the examination, Hence 3.6% of all candidates were absent for both sessions.

Table 1: **Distribution of candidates' grades for Sec Social Studies May 2013**

GRADE	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	U	ABS	TOTAL
PAPER A	14	64	87	115	205			262	15	762
PAPER B				96	174	106	64	282	40	762
TOTAL	14	64	87	211	379	106	64	544	55	1524
% OF TOTAL	0.9	4.2	5.7	13.8	24.9	7.0	4.2	35.7	3.6	100.0

2.0 Comments regarding candidates' performance

2.1 Paper I 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 9, 8, 12, 9 and 12 and for Section B the marks were 10, 8, 16, 6 and 10.

2.2 Tables 2 and 3 give an indication of the candidates' performance.

Table 2: Paper I – Option A (Total present 746, Total Absent 16):

Question No.	A1	A2	A3	A4	A5	B1	B2	B3	B4	B5
Total Answers	746	746	746	746	746	746	746	746	746	746
Average Mark	3.25	4.79	6.86	3.2	5.7	7.49	4.02	9.28	2.64	4.47

Table 3: Paper I – Option B (Total Present 721, Total Absent 41):

Question No.	A1	A2	A3	A4	A5	B1	B2	B3	B4	B5
Total Answers	721	721	721	721	721	721	721	721	721	721
Average Mark	0.97	3.11	3.17	0.92	4.24	5.99	2.81	6.84	1.85	2.3

2.3 Paper II was divided into four Sections (A, B, C and D) each having two essay questions. Candidates had to choose and answer one question from each Section. Each question carried a total of 25 marks. The paper for Option B candidates followed the same pattern but the questions were structured.

2.4 Tables 4 and 5 give an indication of the candidates' performance.

Table 4: Paper IIA - Option A (Total Present 745, Total Absent 17):

Question No.	A1	A2	B3	B4	C5	C6	D7	D8
Total Answers	576	169	177	568	240	505	333	412
Average Mark	11.5	11.7	11.9	13	10.9	10.1	9.45	10.13

Table 5: Paper IIB – Option B (Total Present 713, Absent 49):

Question No.	A1	A2	B3	B4	C5	C6	D7	D8
Total Answers	339	373	423	283	259	441	146	560
Average Mark	9.23	15.1	9.69	9.23	11.1	11.9	12	12.8

2.5 For Option A candidates, question A1 was the most popular but question B4 carried the highest average mark (13), while question A2 was the least popular and question D7 carried the lowest average mark (9.45).

For Option B candidates, question D8 was the most popular and question D7 was the least popular. Question A2 also carried the highest average mark (15.1), while questions A1 and B4 carried the lowest average mark (9.23).

Some candidates, especially from Option B, still tend to ignore the rubrics: they did not answer four questions as was expected or attempted to answer all questions briefly.

3.0 Language Option

3.1 The number of candidates who opted to answer in English remains low as indicated in Table 6 below.

Table 6: Candidates opting to answer in English:

	Option A	Option B
Paper I	213 or 25.5% of 746 present	125 or 17.3% of 721 present
Paper II	186 or 24.9% of 745 present	117 or 16.4% of 713 present
All candidates:		
Paper I	338 or 23.0% of 1467 present	
Paper IIA/B	303 or 20.7% of 1458 present	

4.0 Comments on Paper I

4.1 Many candidates from Option A, showed that they had a good grasp of concepts dealt with in Section A. The same cannot be said for Option B candidates.

4.2 Section B dealt with highly topical issues such as poverty, economic development, migration and gender disparities. Rather than conveying the conceptual details relevant to these issues candidates often got stuck in the conventional wisdom transmitted in the everyday conversation or gossip columns of newspapers.

4.3 In both Sections candidates, in their tendency to articulate the functionalist perspective, presented a one-dimensional view of the issues posed in the questions and thus failed to engage in a critical evaluation.

5.0 Specific remarks on Paper I

Section A

5.1 **Question 1**:

The majority of Option A candidates managed to name the three branches of power in a democracy and to explain their functions. Some candidates however defined them as different types of government such as monarchy and republic and/or in terms of the differentiation of the offices of the president and the prime minister. On the other hand, Option B candidates had no idea what these branches of power are. There were candidates who confused them with civic participation, equality, power at work and leadership.

5.2 **Question 2**:

a) Pluralism was often equated with freedom of choice in a free trade market rather than with multi-party system and the lobbying power of interest groups. Many Option B candidates had no idea of this concept.

b) Parliamentary representation: Most candidates faltered on this question as they failed to grasp the concept of representation and its crucial role in the democratic system and process.

c) Constitution: The majority of candidates found o difficulty in giving a definition of 'constitution'.

d) Human Rights: As regards human rights candidates tended to be rather generic as they focused more on the survival kit of humans rather than on upholding the human dignity of every person.

5.3 **Question 3**:

Candidates had to name four freedoms found in modern democracies. Many listed freedom of movement, expression and religion. But there were many who confused these freedoms with rights as for example the right to vote.

5.4 **Question 4**:

The meaning of pluralism was not always grasped by the candidates as a sizeable number of candidates equated this concept with a wide choice of consumer goods in the market. Many failed to give any adequate explanation. Those candidates who managed to give a correct definition of pluralism focused more on the media than on cultural diversity and multi-party system.

5.5 **Question 5**:

This question focused on citizens' participation in society. Although answers were full of rhetoric, *many candidates managed to point out the issues relevant to citizens' participation. Mostly* they focused on political activism which entails the duty of citizens to exercise their right to vote and being active members of NGOs or interest groups.

Section B

5.6 **Question 1**:

a) Poverty: Generally most candidates found no difficulty in defining poverty even though many were simplistic in their definition. Only a few Option A candidates commented on the difference between absolute and relative poverty.

b) Developing countries: Development was rarely defined in economic terms as it was often equated with cultural deficiency and the inherent lack of material things.

c) Migrants: The majority of candidates could not distinguish between asylum seekers and migrants.

d) Social discrimination: Though some Option A candidates were able to point out the issues of race, ethnicity, ageism and gender as issues relevant to discrimination, many candidates equated discrimination with exclusion while others equated it with a wide choice of consumer goods.

e) Exclusion: The great majority of candidates failed to grasp the meaning of exclusion.

5.7 **Question 2**:

The gender cultural artefacts of gender stereotype that are associated with the domestic role of females were emphasized by a number of candidates. However, answers were often replete with clichés pointing out the superior physical strength of men which makes them more amenable to the demands of the labour market. Politics was the most mentioned area where gender disparities tend to be very visible. Some candidates referred to the presence of gender disparities in religious organisations and Muslim countries.

5.8 **Question 3**:

The majority of candidates associated migrants with irregular immigrants who in crossing the Mediterranean to find a settlement in Europe, by fate rather than design, land in Malta. Most of the candidates had basic knowledge of push factors for migration from poor countries but then found it less easy to mention difficulties encountered in receiving countries. In mentioning difficulties, emphasis was often made on the suffering and tribulation these migrants experience during their voyage on board a boat.

5.9 **Question 4**:

Many candidates do not know what 'household' means. Consequently answers to this question were often weak. The problem of balancing working life with family demands for the single parent family rarely featured in the answers.

5.10 **Question 5:**

Overall answers lacked the insight that provides a critical analysis of the issue posed in this question. Indeed answers tended to consist of simplistic and long winded arguments often advocating that the almsgiving, generated by the munificent philanthropic gestures shown during high profile charity campaigns and voluntary work, be extend to promote the welfare of the poor living in the developing countries.

6.0   Comments regarding Paper IIA

6.1   The aim of Paper IIA is to provide an opportunity for candidates to deal with a number of areas in depth. An overall perusal of the candidates' papers indicates that the average standard is less than satisfactory and only a limited percentage of students seemed to be well prepared.

6.2   It was evident that most candidates do not approach the subject in a rigorous manner and assume that questions may be answered on the basis of their social experience in life or their personal insight or what may be termed common-sense syndrome.

6.3   It was noted that there were candidates who made use of model answers which they pasted in an uncritical manner during the examination independent of the specialized focus of the questions provided. This was evident by the fact that many responses' introductions and conclusions, albeit somewhat out of point, were highly identical.

6.4   Markers noted that several candidates failed to give evidence of a general knowledge of even basic concepts. However, there were a significant number of candidates who indicated that they had studied intensively, and who were thus well prepared and well disposed to engage in a rigorous form of argument. These candidates generally showed evidence of intensive reading of relevant text.

7.0 Specific remarks on Paper IIA

7.1   **Question 1**:
Candidates were asked to name, describe and elaborate on causes and effects of conflict of roles in a group. They were expected to define the concept of 'role set' and explain how role conflict occurs when these expectations are in disagreement with each other. Most candidates provided very general arguments and few elaborated upon the causes of role conflict within groups such as lack of understanding of differences of rights/duties of leaders and members, hidden personal agendas, challenging leader's authority, formation of cliques with different loyalties, and poor communication and relationship skills – to mention some. At the same time, few candidates elaborated on the *positive* effects of group conflict such as an indication of groups' dynamism and generation of new ideas and new strategies on one hand, and its *negative* effects such as no long term planning due to uncertainty and lack of trust.

7.2   **Question 2**:
Candidates were expected to examine detail cultural diversity in contemporary (Maltese) society. Whilst many pointed out that present societies are experiencing a rise in multiculturalism owing to an increase in movement of people for work, study or leisure purposes, and hence, the settlement of minority groups within mainstream culture because of migration, only a few pointed out the other various causes and effects of multiculturalism. These include the globalisation of mass media and Information and Communication Technologies due to an increased presence of trans-national companies. However, it was positive to note that many candidates pointed out how certain localities, such as St. Paul's Bay, are experiencing an increasing number of foreign residents, and hence, drastic changes in the locality's socio-economic demography. On the other hand, few mentioned the increasing number of foreign workers working alongside local workers, and how this is leading towards more openness to different religions, sects and denominations, and at the same time, a more secular society. The Council of Europe's and European Union's emphasis on multiculturalism and multilingualism was largely absent in all replies.

7.3 **Question 3**:
In this question candidates were requested to provide arguments on issues relating to political and civic engagement. Many highlighted that politics is to be understood as a service to people, and hence, that people should be at the centre of political activity. Yet, few candidates emphasised how politics and civic engagement is an essential human activity, whether it is conducted within family, education, work and the economy, welfare and leisure, the environment, production and consumption, health services and welfare. The need of the right information and knowledge about social and political issues which are of interest to public good, and the encouragement of reading and listening to political news from a critical perspective were also largely absent in candidates' answers. Politics was always explained from a Parliamentary perspective rather than a micro perspective such as presenting constructive proposals to Local Council and Government by expressing views in daily/weekly newspapers, participating in public discussions on, for example, issues relating to education, disability, employment opportunities, and youth political involvement. Whilst the issue of trade unionism cropped up in many candidates' answers, the same cannot be said with respect to the importance of citizens to become more knowledgeable about economic, cultural, political and environmental issues, and active at community and/or national level.

7.4 **Question 4**:
Here candidates were expected to provide arguments for the social value of work. Generally speaking, candidates who opted to answer this question did well. Many discussed how occupations are a vehicle to discovering oneself in terms of one's skills, strength, and limitations, as well as describing oneself and how others come to know us, giving us a sense of identity, and a means of team-building. On the other hand, few candidates emphasised the ethics of work such as self-discipline, punctuality, conformity to group, seeking balance between individual wants and needs versus organisational goals. The possibility of work as a means of contributing to institutions, the upgrading of the environment, and becoming more aware of occupational health and safety measures were also largely invisible. However, many candidates elaborated on how work can function to bolster interaction such as widening a circle of friends and social networking.

7.5 **Question 5**:
In this question candidates were expected to describe the characteristics of a youth culture and to discuss how society may react to such a subculture. Only a few did succeed in explaining what is really meant by a subculture and failed to answer what are the characteristics of a youth subculture. These did point out that members of this go against the mainstream society by not following the societal norms and even manifest a certain rebellion. A good number, however, restricted their answers by showing how the members are different from mainstream society, the majority mentioning their style of dress, their appearances including their hairstyles and the type of music they prefer. Few did succeed in showing the reactions of society to followers of a youth subculture often considering them as immature, irresponsible and in certain cases even as deviant.

7.6 **Question 6**:
Here candidates were asked to explain ways in which people may be socially excluded from their society. At the same time they were requested to discuss the various effects of social exclusion on vulnerable social groups. The majority of candidates failed to realise that the question was on social exclusion and on social group exclusion and not on other forms of exclusion or individual exclusion. Similarly when asked to describe the different ways of social exclusion, the answers were very superficial. In the same vein, although reference was made to persons with disability, older persons, religious, ethnic and racial groups, as well as former convicts and the unemployed as examples of the socially excluded, very few did succeed in explaining how and why these people do find it extremely difficult to be integrated in mainstream society.

7.7 **Question 7**:
This question dealt with the causes and effects of an ageing society. It is encouraging to note that a good number of candidates did succeed in highlighting the causes of this demographic phenomenon which is taking place in every society although at different rapidity. These include amongst others: higher life expectancy resulting from medical and social advances as well as housing services, a lower birth rate resulting from changing roles of females as well as family values. When it comes to the second part of the question which focused on the effects of population ageing on society, only a few candidates succeeded in distinguishing between the positive and negative consequences. Thus very few showed how in many instances older persons do contribute to society in general and to their families in particular. The majority mentioned the negative effects of this demographic phenomenon: these included the economic and financial strain especially as a result of pension schemes, healthcare and welfare services, etc.

7.8 **Question 8**:
In this question candidates were asked to discuss the various aspects of globalisation and its effects on Maltese society. There was a pronounced difference between the answers given: a small number being very good whilst the majority being rather weak and well below the average. There were some who did not give the correct definition of globalisation, mixing globalisation with urbanisation. The majority of answers synonymised globalisation with the financial aspects such as international trade, banking, capital markets. Equal emphasis was made on technological innovations especially in the area of communication including the internet links, cellular phones, media networks. A good number of candidates succeeded in answering correctly the second part of the question. Among the positive effects mentioned, the most common mentioned were food chains; global brands; enhanced opportunities for travel, study and/or work in other countries; international media exposure and tourism. In comparison, very few mentioned such positive aspects as multiculturalism and decrease in insularity. In comparison, a threat to indigenous culture and traditions; environmental degradation; ain increase in crime rate including drug trafficking; health risks, etc. were mentioned as some of the negative effects brought about through globalisation.

8.0 Comments regarding Paper IIB

8.1 Markers have noted superficial and populist answers and that though a few candidates give an indication that they have some knowledge of sociological concepts and theories, the majority fail to give precise definitions and tend to use generic terms.

8.2 Further, many candidates still fail to present critical, analytical and reflective comments on social facts, processes and issues. Many echoed popular gossip, the media or political clichés in their writing.

8.3 Candidates give the indication that they are relying on lessons notes, model answers or personal insights when formulating their answers without giving much attention to the formulation and structure (including the marking scheme) of the questions.

8.4 It is unfortunate to note that attention has to be drawn once again to the fact that "candidates are sitting for the examination with an attitude that general knowledge is sufficient to enable them to gain a pass mark".

9.0 Specific remarks on Paper IIB

9.1 **Question 1**:
Most candidates identified groups in simplistic terms while others mentioned specific groups. Little importance was given to their functions. Very few candidates could identify actual roles in a group. Many referred to listening and helping others as functions of a group rather than focusing on specific roles. Further, the majority of respondents misunderstood the concept of 'socialisation' while on forms of conflict within a group several candidates referred to those occasions when the leader of the group was undemocratic or not listening to others. Few candidates actually referred to conflicts arising from the very roles.

9.2 **Question 2**:
Most candidates defined 'national identity' as that which distinguishes us as Maltese from other countries, and successfully identified three characteristics of Maltese national identity. Similarly, a good number of candidates identified processes of multiculturalism such as immigration, tourism, religious belief and rites of worship, the role of the social media, the influence of other cultures and the learning of languages. A few candidates referred to education as a means of greater toleration although few mentioned direct interaction with children or people from other cultures, e.g. through the same educational system. With regard to the promotion of Maltese national identity, many limited themselves to cultural activities such as feasts and local traditional events particularly targeted for tourists. Others were even more limited in their suggestions, e.g. we should speak Maltese, teach Maltese and religion to Maltese children, export Maltese food. Many candidates read this question more as promoting Malta to tourists rather than preserving or promoting our national heritage.

9.3 **Question 3**:
Many candidates could identify characteristics of a non-democratic government although most were very simplistic when it came to explaining how citizens are represented in parliament. In fact this was the weakest part of the answer given by many candidates. Many mentioned the Government representing citizens because of the vote or representing Malta at EU level. With regard to participation in political activity, many mentioned voting, attending meetings of political parties and canvassing for one's preferred candidates. Ways of participating and active citizenship, such as forming pressure groups to promote a political agenda of local or national interest, offering realistic suggestions for the advancement of social living or taking a personal or group stand on issues of national importance, were completely lacking.

9.4 **Question 4**:
This question was not well addressed by most of the candidates. While many candidates could distinguish the different sectors of the economy, many did not answer sections (b) and (c) satisfactorily. Many misinterpreted the Maltese term *modi ta' mogħdija taż-żmien* (leisure time activities). Hence most candidates discussed different work patterns or working conditions in the past and in the present rather than referred to old and new leisure activities. Section (c) where candidates were asked to explain how leisure patterns are related to working conditions in industrialised countries proved to be rather difficult for most candidates.

9.5 **Question 5**:

Although most candidates had an idea of what deviance means, most associated it only with breaking the law. There were a few candidates who explained what subculture means in their answer to section (b) and how a subculture could be a deviant subculture due to peer pressure or due to experimentation which runs counter to the dominant culture and the generally accepted social customs and norms, however most answers were very simplistic referring to young people smoking and drinking alcohol rather than to the real concept of subculture. Regarding ways of controlling deviance, there were some interesting answers which referred to greater social acceptance and toleration, support for young people undergoing problems such as drug addiction, the creation of activities for youth as well as to harsher penalties for breaking the law.

9.6 **Question 6**:

A significant number of candidates could not distinguish 'indicators' from 'causes' of poverty, referring mostly to lack of money, lack of clothing or lack of shelter as indicators. However, there were some candidates who could identify relevant aspects such as homelessness, unemployment, single parenthood and ill-health. With reference to section (b) of the question, most candidates could identify some vulnerable groups in society. However, there were some candidates who misunderstood the question and referred instead to support groups who help these vulnerable groups, e.g. Sedqa, Church Children's Homes and Caritas. The reasons for the greater risk of poverty, however, were poorly addressed, if at all. Further with reference to section (c) of the question, the majority of candidates could not identify different types of poverty and instead discussed examples of how a person may end up poor or by mentioning again points raised in answers to section (a) of the question. Very few candidates distinguished between relative, absolute, material and non-material poverty, and other forms such as social and spiritual poverty.

9.7 **Question 7**:

This was not a very popular question. However, most of those who chose to answer it could define demographic changes and discuss aspects raised in the question such as greater life expectancy and lower birth rates. There were some interesting answers regarding the social changes which have led to a lower birth rate and many candidates raised points such as education, contraceptives, higher living standards, more individualism and higher expectations of younger couples. Some candidates, however, ignored the second part of the question section (d) regarding the effects this is having on society.

9.8 **Question 8**:

This was a very popular question and most candidates could answer it fairly well. However, waste management was to a large extent reduced to recycling, reducing and reusing waste. There were candidates who did not differentiate between section (c) which referred to systems adopted by the State to manage waste and section (d) which referred to the role of consumers. Such candidates generally tended to repeatedly refer to how we should recycle waste or to adopt the three Rs.

Chairperson
2013 Examination Panel