



L-Università
ta' Malta

MATSEC
Examinations Board



Examiners' Report
SEC Social Studies

May Session 2024

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A. STATISTICAL INFORMATION

The total number of candidates who registered for Social Studies for the May 2024 Session was **661, 342** opting for Paper IIA and **319** opting for Paper IIB. There were **53** absent from the Paper IIA group and **129** absent from the Paper IIB group.

Table 1 shows the distribution of grades for the May 2024 session of the examination

GRADE	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	U	ABS	TOTAL
PAPER A	15	42	78	69	54	-	-	31	53	342
PAPER B	-	-	-	49	57	36	10	38	129	319
TOTAL	15	42	78	118	111	36	10	69	182	661
% OF TOTAL	2.3	6.4	11.8	17.9	16.8	5.4	1.5	10.4	27.5	100.0

Table 1: Distribution of grades for Social Studies 2024 May Session

B. GENERAL REMARKS

This year, candidates' performance is comparable to recent years' results. However, as in previous years, there remains variation in the knowledge and skills of candidates, particularly between those taking Paper A and those taking Paper B. Examiners consistently observe common challenges related to the required competences in Social Studies.

These include:

- The understanding of basic terms and concepts;
- To define key syllabus concepts and to elaborate adequately;
- Generalizing and constructing answers based on personal experience, and common-sense knowledge, rather than demonstrating a deep understanding of the subject matter.
- The ability to demonstrate the skill of constructing well-supported arguments based on evidence.
- Analysis and interpretation.

Examiners across various subjects frequently observe a decline in candidates' linguistic skills. These include:

- Inadequate writing skills - handwriting which is clear and readable, is of paramount importance.
- Candidates often struggle with properly adhering to the title and fully understanding questions. They would benefit from carefully considering the title or question before beginning their writing. Emphasizing the importance of planning their work cannot be overstated.
- Clearly indicate the Section and the question number.

C. COMMENTS ON PAPER I & PAPER II

Paper I was the same for all candidates, whether they were sitting for Paper A or Paper B. It was divided into two sections: A and B. Candidates were expected to answer all questions. Overall candidates were better prepared to tackle questions in this paper. Nonetheless, there were some common negative trends:

- Not carefully reading the source material before answering the questions.
- Lack of analytical skills when examining sources.

PAPER I

SECTION A

Question 1

- (a) Socialization: Only a handful of candidates gave the proper definition. Most candidates defined socialisation as is colloquially understood i.e. the meeting up of people, communicating together and having fun together.
- (b) Stereotypes: A good number of candidates answered correctly. Many mentioned typical stereotypes are generalized beliefs about a particular category of people.
- (c) Minorities: The majority of candidates got mixed up between “minorities” and “minors”. The majority gave the answer as these being youths or the young group of citizens in society. Those candidates who correctly defined the term also gave examples of minorities in society.
- (d) Mass Media: The majority of candidates answered this correctly giving examples such as TV, radio and internet.
- (e) Identity Development: candidates knew the meaning of the term identity development but were in difficulty as to how they could define it as the ongoing process via which individuals form a sense of self. Most reused same words in that they wrote that identity development is the ongoing development of one’s identity.

Question 2

Many candidates answered correctly or showed that they know the concept. Many mentioned that primary socialisation occurs in early childhood within the family, shaping fundamental beliefs and values while secondary socialisation happens later in life through institutions like school, mass media, and religion. Even the candidates who did not answer correctly Q1a, were able to clearly define primary and secondary socialization, but lacked good examples, especially of secondary socialization.

Question 3

This question proved to be a difficult one to answer. Most candidates did not understand the question, and just tried to link the social aspect and the cultural aspect of their lives. The few who answered correctly focused mainly on the use of social media platforms that provide avenues for communication, exposure to diverse viewpoints, and the sharing of experiences and thus influencing the construction of their worldviews. Content creation, youth activism and advocacy were also mentioned.

Question 4

- (a) Mezzi oħra tas-soċjalizzazzjoni was confused with mezzi ta' komunikazzjoni where even though the question stated "apart from media", a large number of candidates who answered in Maltese gave different types of media like TV, radio, etc. The ones who answered in English were mostly correct in their answer.
- (b) Candidates recognized the importance of agents of socialization in shaping individuals' beliefs, social skills, knowledge, and societal expectations. However, what was lacking at times the answers were to clearly identify and discuss different points.

Question 5

A good number of candidates recognized the distinct media usage patterns between young and old individuals. They pointed out that youth heavily engage with social media, while older generations may prefer traditional forms of media like newspapers, radio, and TV. However, the depth of analysis varied. Some candidates delved into the impact of these media forms on different age groups, but only a few truly elaborated on their effects and influence. Encouraging more comprehensive discussions would enhance their responses.

Paper I

Section B

Question 6

- (a) Population: Candidates gave the right answer for the definition of population.
- (b) Rural: candidates had varying interpretations of the term "rural." Some associated it with natural landscapes or farmland, emphasizing tranquillity. Others defined it as a quiet area located outside towns, without specifically mentioning agricultural activity. Encouraging candidates to consider both aspects could lead to more comprehensive definitions.
- (c) Industrialization: A substantial number of candidates did not understand the concept of industrialization, in the sense that they failed to mention the movement from rural areas to towns and cities leading to a sharp decrease in population in the former area and consequently an increase in population in the latter area.
- (d) Urbanization: Most candidates explained what an urban area is, but were not able to actually explain what happens when urbanization occurs i.e. the change from a rural area to a built up area.

(e) Urban Sprawl: Candidates struggled with defining this term. Some either copied the sentence directly from the text or omitted it altogether.

Question 7

- (a) Various candidates mixed population mobility for population growth.
- (b) Few candidates know of the support services given to migrants in Malta, but a substantial number mentioned the Jesuit Refugee service (JRS). A few also mentioned UNHCR while others tried to guess the name of NGOs in the sector. Others mentioned Caritas and Appogg as providing some help.

Question 8

(a) The majority of candidates clearly defined this term as what happens when a refugee or migrant who moved from their country because of civil conflict, religious or cultural persecution, or economic depression, was able to return to the country of origin because conditions had improved.

(b) Answers to this question varied. The majority of candidates focused only on one aspect -mainly migration to look for work. Whereas others were more detailed and answered the question in full by mentioning various economic factors which can increase or decrease the population density - such as a strong economy, social benefits, good healthcare system, an increase of people in slums or in affluent areas, besides the search for work.

Question 9

- (a) Some of the candidates emphasized the risk to life of the sea voyage undertaken by illegal migrants in the Mediterranean. Many mentioned that the problems migrants face when settling in a new country include culture shock, language barriers, poverty and lack of finances and underpayment for employment.
- (b) Not all candidates were able to identify 3 reasons which are leading to the degradation of natural resources. The main reasons mentioned were that a larger population needs more food, materials, combustion of fossil fuels for electricity and cars, etc. Also mentioned was that the increase in buildings is depleting the natural environment. And the third most mentioned reason was pollution which is affecting our land, air and sea.

Question 10

It's notable that many candidates highlighted several advantages of urbanization, including improved education, a stronger sense of community, entertainment options, and better job prospects. However, it's interesting that few, if any, mentioned better infrastructure and an enhanced public transport system compared to rural areas. Encouraging candidates to consider these additional factors could enrich their responses.

PAPER IIA

Paper II was divided into two versions: A and B. The distinction between Paper A and B lies in the question design and the expected answer structure. Paper IIA questions were presented in essay form, assessing candidates' ability to construct arguments and discuss themes in depth. Paper IIB questions, in contrast, followed a more structured format. While they still assessed candidates' knowledge and ability to construct arguments, they were less demanding than the questions in Paper IIA.

Question 1

Most candidates who opted for this question provided a clear definition of the concept of community. While candidates mentioned some contemporary challenges, they did not provide ample examples such as technology, urbanization, and individualism. However, they did reference past generations and how communities worked together. The most commonly used examples were of church gatherings and socializing outdoors.

Question 2

This question was significantly more popular than question number 1. Most candidates demonstrated a strong understanding of non-conformity; however, quite a few failed to connect non-conformity with social change. While many provided excellent examples of how adolescents deviate from certain norms, most did not clearly explain how this behaviour leads to societal change. The top-performing candidates effectively argued that non-conformity drives change, citing historical instances where positive societal shifts were initiated by individuals who chose not to adhere to established norms.

Question 3

The vast majority of candidates discussed the four major religions but did not address how these religions promote global peace. Unfortunately, most candidates focused solely on describing these religions without further elaboration, resulting in a loss of marks as the essay question was not fully answered. A few candidates, however, went beyond mere descriptions and effectively discussed how understanding different religions can reduce discrimination and stereotypes.

Question 4

Most candidates provided several examples of work done by the Local Council; however, the majority were not clear on the distinction between centralisation and decentralisation of power. On the other hand, other candidates mentioned that thanks to Local Councils it is easier for people to voice their opinions when needed. Some candidates argued in favor of the local council, while others stated that the central government now handles most responsibilities, with people preferring to seek help from a minister rather than the mayor. Very few candidates mentioned instances where local councils have opposed certain central government projects.

Question 5

Candidates tended to tackle different aspects of the question, that is mass media, consumerism and youth's leisure patterns, separately and discussing the title as a whole in a very limited way. Quite a number of candidates focused mainly on social media, dealing with consumerism and youth's leisure patterns quite sparingly. Another interesting insight which was argued in quite a number of essays was the deep connection between mass media and consumerism. Candidates cited influencers as a case in point, though

unfortunately these were mentioned more in a matter-of-fact way rather than from a critical point of view. One effective way utilised to analyse the impact of mass media and consumerism on youth's leisure patterns was by comparing such practices with the past, yet, very few candidates opted to do so.

Question 6

Candidates struggled to discuss elements of gender equality and identify advocates for the cause. While most candidates understood the concept of gender equality, they found it challenging to discuss its integration into policies, programs, and activities. As with other essay titles, rather than tackling the title as a whole, many candidates tackled the various parts separately and very often omitted dealing with 'mainstreaming' which was an important aspect of the title. Only a handful of candidates managed to actually define 'mainstreaming' and insert it in the argument. Some candidates compared and contrasted Western cultures with other cultures yet via very superficial arguments and sweeping statements while others underpinned their argument with a historical analysis in terms of progress made in this regard, again, rather superficially.

Question 7

In addressing this question candidates tackling this title often did so quite systematically, that is by exploring one by one the technological, economic and social factors which were affecting levels of mortality and fertility. Quite a few contextualised this in a number of interesting demographic observations. Nevertheless, apart from making an argument from a linear progress perspective, a number of candidates confused progress with rising rates, especially when referring to fertility, which is very often not the case. While the title asked the candidates to consider the local situation, in general, which very few have done so correctly.

Question 8

In this essay, candidates explored a vast array of injustices faced by youth and society in general, including injustices related to the environment, gender-related injustices and injustices faced in a scholastic context. Nevertheless, while very few mentioned pressure groups such as Graffiti and Malala Yousafzai and Greta Thunberg, candidates argued vaguely about how youths can face and struggle against such injustices. Such arguments were characterised by a general lack of a sense of agency and why youths should be viewing the world from a different perspective and, in present-day situations, it seems they are not.

PAPER IIB

Question 1

(a) In general the definitions were correct.

(b) Most candidates did not read the question properly which was reflected in the shallow answers presented. Rather than providing three local institutions, candidates mention three things which can be done in maintaining a sense of community.

(c) Most candidates were well-acquainted with the term social change and provided practical examples of how communities evolve over time.

Question 2

(a) In contrast to question 1, candidates provided more concrete answers and demonstrated greater knowledge on this concept.

(b) Candidates mentioned various factors such as protests, social media, changing lifestyles, and defying authority, among others. A handful of candidates chose to leave this question unanswered.

(c) Candidates were able to provide a valid distinction between non-conformity and social change. Examples mentioned included the age gap and its effects on contemporary society, as well as differing views on what should be accepted. However, some candidates were unable to justify the difference between the two terms and only provided basic information on the matter

Question 3

(a) Most candidates opted to answer this question. Candidates were able to provide detailed definition to the question.

(b) Candidates mainly mentioned Christianity and Islam. Only a handful of participants mentioned Hinduism, Buddhism, and Judaism. Detailed information was provided about the main characteristics of Christianity and Islam.

(c) Quite a considerable number of candidates could not manage to answer this question satisfactorily, as they only mentioned a list of characteristics rather than how the knowledge of different religions can encourage peace.

Question 4

(a) In general the definitions were correct.

(b) Candidates were able to mention three roles played by the local councils. Key roles mentioned were Providing Services and Facilities, Community Representation, Local Planning and Development. Some candidates discussed how Local Councils engage with residents through various methods to ensure active participation and representation.

(c) Most candidates provided a good number of examples. However, some struggled to articulate whether the importance of the Local Council has diminished. Additionally, there was a noticeable lack of knowledge regarding the current relevance of the Local Councils' importance.

Question 5

(a) In general the definitions were correct.

(b) Candidates explored various social problems, including substance abuse, racism, bullying, and cyberbullying.

(c) In the majority of cases, candidates were quite aware of the subject matter, yet, owing to a superficial understanding of consumerism, quite a number of the answers were not very clearly articulated. On the other hand, quite a number made interesting links with social media, influencers and what generally characterises their own lifestyle.

Question 6

(a) When defining 'gender' quite a number of candidates confused it with 'sex'.

(b) Different gender-related discriminations were referred to and in the best answers, candidates categorised these different types, e.g. discriminations suffered owing to societal stereotypes.

(c) Candidates struggled to discuss elements of gender equality and identify advocates for the cause. While most candidates understood the concept of gender equality, they found it challenging to discuss its integration into policies, programs, and activities. Common themes included the right to vote, cultural aspects, and feminism.

Question 7

(a) The definitions of demography as a study of patterns related to population were, generally, to the point.

(b) Many candidates pointed at birth rate, death rate and migration as the main factors determining the rate of population growth, while a number of others referred to other issues such as pandemics, natural disasters, which are often relatable to the above.

(c) Quite a few were not able to provide a clear definition of urbanization. As a result, their answers lacked precision and specificity. The majority of answers included examples of environmental stresses such as overpopulation, pollution and over-building but quite often ignored social stresses such as crime.

Question 8

(a) The definition of social development hovered between two definitions which can both be found in sociological literature i.e. the process of improving the well-being of people in a society and the process through which children learn how to behave in society.

(b) While most candidates were aware that, though interrelated, there is quite a difference between the two concepts, often the answers weren't clearly articulated. Some candidates confused the definition of standard of living with that of quality of life and vice versa.

(c) Though this wasn't the scope of the question, many candidates focused on the negative effects of technology on child development. Nevertheless, there were some interesting takes which involved the links between technology and the educational journey of children with disability, language learning, amongst others.

D. CONCLUDING COMMENTS

Many candidates approach the Social Studies exam with the misconception that they can rely solely on common sense knowledge without any academic preparation. However, this oversimplification overlooks the need for analytical skills to interpret their surroundings and connect real-life events to specific themes.

Examiners emphasize that candidates should approach the principles and content of Social Studies holistically. It is crucial for candidates to be well-versed in the terminology, concepts, and processes highlighted in the syllabus. Encouraging candidates to view society from a comprehensive and mature perspective enables them to demonstrate sufficient knowledge and understanding. This, in turn, allows them to provide analytical, reflective, and critical commentary on social issues. By cultivating these characteristics,

candidates can formulate intelligent conclusions and suggestions that contribute to greater awareness of societal issues affecting our communities.

Chairperson

Examiners Panel 2024