

# 2012 HSC Notes from the Marking Centre – Society and Culture

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## Introduction

This document has been produced for the teachers and candidates of the Stage 6 course in Society and Culture. It contains comments on candidate responses to the 2012 Higher School Certificate examination, providing an overview of candidates' performance and indicating their relative strengths and weaknesses in the written examination and Personal Interest Project (PIP).

This document should be read in conjunction with the relevant syllabus, the 2012 Higher School Certificate examination, the 2012 marking guidelines and other support documents developed by the Board of Studies to assist in the teaching and learning of Society and Culture.

### General comments

Teachers and candidates should be aware that examiners may ask questions that address the syllabus outcomes in a manner that requires candidates to respond by integrating the knowledge, understanding and skills they developed through studying the course.

Candidates need to be aware that the mark allocated to the question and the answer space (where this is provided on the examination paper) are guides to the length of the required response. A longer response will not in itself lead to higher marks. Writing far beyond the indicated space may reduce the time available for answering other questions.

Candidates need to be familiar with the Board's [Glossary of Key Words](#), which contains some terms commonly used in examination questions. However, candidates should also be aware that not all questions will start with or contain one of the key words from the glossary. Questions such as 'how?', 'why?' or 'to what extent?' may be asked, or verbs that are not included in the glossary may be used, such as 'design', 'translate' or 'list'.

## Personal Interest Project

### General comments

In outstanding projects, candidates demonstrated a high academic standard of research and often a uniqueness of topic, design or execution. In these projects, candidates provided a rich analysis of the chosen topic with an in-depth, sophisticated synthesis of their findings. Course concepts were thoroughly integrated throughout and all components clearly aligned with syllabus requirements for the project. Resources in these projects were clearly and

appropriately annotated. Candidates developed their topic to allow for a synthesis between personal experience and public knowledge. They also integrated course concepts and research methodologies into cohesive, sustained and well-communicated projects.

In better projects, candidates provided clear evidence of an effective research process, integrating both their primary and secondary research findings with appropriate writing, editing and synthesis. They made explicit the cross-cultural and continuity and/or change perspectives, and these were integrated throughout the central material. The ideas from the introduction were logically developed throughout the central material, and were reflected in the judgements identified in the conclusion. The project log provided a holistic overview of the candidate's research development with a reflective analysis of methodologies, which also identified potential bias, where appropriate, and critical judgement of their research findings.

In weaker projects, candidates were often limited by having selected a very broad topic or a topic that proved difficult to research over a sustained period. Often they did not acknowledge bias in research or personal views, and sometimes dealt with issues that had ethical considerations that were not addressed. The central material often consisted of summarising material from secondary sources about an issue, without sufficient judgement regarding their research findings. Some candidates also overly relied on non-academic sources on the internet without sufficient acknowledgement of those sources. Candidates who chose to conduct primary research using the internet needed to demonstrate an awareness of the validity, bias and usefulness of those methodologies. Log entries were often calendar entries consisting of simplistic overviews of each month rather than a developmental analysis or reflection on the research process, and resources were limited and poorly annotated. These projects showed a poor understanding and integration of the cross-cultural and continuity and/or change components, with some projects including these components as separate chapters rather than integrating them into the central material.

### **Candidate's choice of topic**

Candidates should carefully read page 9 of the syllabus: 'If a student is considering a Personal Interest Project topic or method of research that might be controversial or possibly unethical, the student should discuss the topic selection with the teacher or the school's principal.' The choice of topic should reflect a Society and Culture course investigation, not a narrative on a topical social issue.

In better projects, students showed clear engagement with the research process, and a clearly refined topic choice. Topics that reflected a genuine Society and Culture focus enabled candidates to demonstrate achievement of a high level of social and cultural literacy. They selected topics that allowed them to conduct valid primary and secondary research and enabled analysis and integration of findings. These topics also allowed for the synthesis of personal experience and public knowledge.

In weaker projects, the topic choice often prevented candidates from being able to develop their ideas and this restricted the synthesis of personal experience and public knowledge. In weaker projects, candidates often did not identify the inherent nature of cross-cultural comparisons within the topic. These candidates often included a less valid cross-cultural comparison, due to the limited nature of the topic choice.

Some candidates who selected very personal issues on which to base their research were challenged to relate these sufficiently to syllabus content, course concepts and appropriate social issues. Personal experience may be appropriate to the project but should be balanced with substantial public knowledge.

There were still many candidates who selected broad topics without a central focus and there was an overemphasis on topics related to adolescence. Such projects were often subjective and relied on unsupported generalisations.

Candidates should be aware of the guidelines in relation to the submission of projects. A project completed for another course cannot be submitted, in part or total, as a personal interest project. Active teacher guidance in the project proposal and supervision of progress reports on the project can assist candidates to avoid inappropriate topic choices and/or research methods.

### **Project log**

The log is a 500-word reflective extended response that details the development of the candidate's intellectual journey from the initial planning and wide reading to conducting primary research and, where appropriate, accounting for a candidate's unexpected findings. Better logs expressed insight into the candidate's engagement with the social issue and the research process. The log should be based on the candidate's diaries, but should be more than a chronological list of events and occurrences. It should be a holistic statement of reflection on how and why the research took place and the effectiveness of the overall research process. Some discussion of the key goals of the research and evaluations of the research process may also be included.

### **Presentation and structure**

*The Assessment and Reporting in Society and Culture Stage 6* (pp 10–11) provides information about the presentation of the PIP. Projects are to be typed in either Times New Roman or Arial font, in 12 point, with one-and-a-half-lines line spacing. The candidate's name or the name of their school must never appear in the project. If graphs, tables, photographs and diagrams are used, they need to be labelled and discussed. Candidates should develop a specific and clear focus which is maintained throughout the PIP by the synthesis of all components. The treatment of aspects of the project such as the cross-cultural and continuity and/or change components, concepts and methodologies should not be located in separated sections. These should be integrated into the overall text and discussion of the project.

Candidates must consider the ethics of research and the issue of plagiarism. This is particularly important with the increased use of the internet as a research tool. When candidates discuss the ideas of others, they should try to synthesise these ideas into discussions on their own views. It is vital to acknowledge the works of others by referencing, using, for example, the Harvard system. Acknowledgement of sources must be included in the annotated bibliography, with comments on their usefulness and validity to the research presented.

Some candidates presented projects, or components of their projects such as the introduction or log, that were significantly over the clearly specified word limit. Candidates are disadvantaged if their projects and appendices are over the word limit. Candidates should not include multiple copies of questionnaires and other evidence of primary research undertaken during the completion of the project. Any information deemed significant to the project should generally be located within the central material, where its inclusion allows greater potential for it to be more effectively integrated. Appendices are not included in the marking guidelines nor considered in the marking of the project.

### **Research methodologies**

Candidates should refer to the outline of the characteristics of methodologies (*Society and Culture syllabus* p17) about appropriate choice of methodology for their PIP inquiry. Methodologies used should be discussed in an integrated way throughout the central material, rather than in separate chapters for each methodology. The appropriateness, validity and possible biases of each methodology should be discussed. Using a range of methodologies for

research, both primary and secondary, is a requirement of the PIP. Candidates should not overly rely on secondary research.

In better projects, candidates demonstrated an understanding of the limitations of particular research methodologies. There were a number of candidates who confused content analysis with secondary research, and questionnaires with surveys. These are distinct methodologies that need to be identified and applied correctly. When candidates indicate they are using content analysis and statistical analysis, the analysed sources should be apparent. Many candidates used the methodology of questionnaires, but did not analyse the results or evaluate their use of this method of gathering data.

Quantitative methodologies may be more effective when reported visually, for example as graphs, tables or pie-charts, and should be referred to meaningfully and integrated into the analysis of findings in the central material. Candidates are assessed on their application of a variety of methodologies, and should not rely on personal reflection, or any other single methodology. Should personal reflection be used, it should be evaluated for bias, validity and usefulness as with all methodologies.

Candidates should select an optimal number of methodologies and deal with these effectively rather than attempt to use too many. Candidates who choose to conduct 'online' surveys, questionnaires or focus groups need to be aware of the limitations of these methodologies, and to communicate these in the log or central material. They are valid research methodologies, but ones that must be evaluated and justified. Cross-cultural perspectives and the continuity and/or change component must be researched through the effective application of methodologies, and should not simply be investigated using secondary research only.

## **Referencing**

In better projects, candidates used a range of primary and secondary resources from both electronic and printed sources. Footnotes were used appropriately. Projects did not include lengthy analysis of research findings that were not included in the central material. In better projects, candidates linked reference annotations to the use of the reference in the research component of the project.

In weaker projects, candidates did not reference all secondary materials used and often did not reference correctly. Not all resources used in their resource list were annotated or annotations were not genuine reflections on the usefulness, validity and bias of the sources. High quality secondary research was necessary to access marks in the higher mark ranges.

## **Written examination**

A number of candidates in 2012 attempted more than one question in Section II or Section III. These candidates received marks for only one of the responses.

In addition, in 2012 some candidates answered a question on the same depth study in both Section II and Section III. These candidates received marks for one question only.

## **Section I – Social and Cultural Continuity and Change**

### **Question 9**

- (a) The majority of candidates identified a relevant micro world change evident in the photo and many acknowledged social change through blended families or smaller family size.

- (b) In many responses, candidates provided well-supported examples of changes in the macro world such as the various pieces of legislation, multiculturalism, the decline of racism, and the empowerment of women and their greater career choices.

In some responses, candidates focused on the role of the media in a globalised world in promoting media identities as role models for intercultural marriages and adoption. In better responses, candidates used examples of macro changes in government policy to support their response.

In weaker responses, candidates described the change to the Purcell family rather than discussing changes in the macro world. They also used colloquial or imprecise language.

### **Question 10**

- (a) Most candidates identified a relevant theory of change and provided an appropriate outline of the tenets of the theory.
- (b) In better responses, candidates showed a clear link between the theory and the changes taking place in a particular country. Responses were coherent and incorporated Society and Culture concepts.

In weaker responses, candidates described some changes to their country of choice but failed to link it back to a theory. In some responses, candidates did not clearly stipulate into which category their theory fell, eg cyclical, functional or other type of social change theory.

In some responses, candidates did not correctly identify a theory of social change, and gave examples such as westernisation, globalisation or Maslow's theory.

## **Sections II and III – Depth Studies**

### **General comments**

For questions with a mark value less than 10, it is not necessary for candidates to write explicit introductions and conclusions to their answers. Candidates may use, but are not required to use, more than one focus study for each part of the Section II depth study questions parts (a), (b) and (c).

### **Popular Culture**

#### **Question 11**

For a question where the command term is 'identify', students are only required to 'recognise and name'. Candidates who wrote more than a paragraph may have detracted from their performance in the other sections.

#### **Question 12**

In better responses, candidates demonstrated a sophisticated knowledge of the reciprocal relationship between mythology and consumption, and explained the impact of mythology on consumption, using specific and detailed examples within their Popular Culture. Candidates who merely described the way the Popular Culture was consumed lacked the necessary detail and insight to achieve in the top bands.

Some weaker responses confused the meaning of mythology in relation to popular culture and related mythologies such as those associated with vampires etc. These candidates struggled to make the conceptual connections required.

### **Question 13**

In better responses, candidates clearly defined their interpretation of producers, owners and participants in relation to the chosen Popular Culture, and also identified how particular perceptions were developed. The ability to make an informed judgment using relevant and specific examples in relation to tensions (minimal or extensive) also ensured a better response. In better responses, candidates assessed tensions within the Popular Culture rather than merely discussing tensions within society as a whole.

In mid-range responses, candidates tended to describe, often with detailed examples, different perceptions associated with the chosen popular culture without clearly establishing the identity of these as owners, producers and participants.

## **Belief Systems**

### **Question 14**

In better responses, candidates clearly outlined the main features of the term ‘belief systems’. In these responses, candidates included characteristics and related concepts such as shared values, customs and traditions which were supported with an example of either a religious or non-religious belief system. Examples included Christianity, Islam, capitalism and feminism.

In weaker responses, candidates identified a general feature of the term ‘belief systems’. In some responses, candidates did not include an example of a religious or non-religious belief system.

### **Question 15**

In better responses, candidates demonstrated a clear relationship between the concept ‘dissent’ and its role in one belief system. These responses were coherent and detailed the role that dissent – such as disagreement, debate and conflict – play in challenging and promoting change in either a religious or non-religious belief, leading to adaption or modification to some aspect of the system. In these responses, candidates effectively integrated supporting evidence to give clarity to their understanding of the role of dissent by using examples such as the Arab spring and gay marriage. In these responses, candidates integrated appropriate depth study concepts such as values, ideology and power and demonstrated a high level of cohesiveness in a well-organised answer.

In weaker responses, candidates often misinterpreted the meaning of dissent and therefore their response lacked clarity and confusion in the development of ideas. These responses tended to refer to dissent or its misinterpreted meaning and attempted to link their response to other course concepts. This generally demonstrated a weaker understanding. In some responses, candidates described an example to illustrate understanding of dissent but neglected to explain the role that dissent plays in belief systems.

### **Question 16**

In better responses, candidates made clear and appropriate judgements on the extent and influence of the processes of globalisation on the role of belief systems in people’s lives. In better responses, candidates fully engaged with the question and applied the meaning of globalisation making strong links to how these processes have affected the lives of people from various cultures and societies. Insightful judgments supported a well-developed and cohesive response that demonstrated a high level of understanding about how globalisation processes impact on the role of beliefs in people’s lives. These responses integrated relevant

course concepts to support their thorough understanding. For example, technology and media have assisted the diffusion of secular beliefs by challenging traditional views.

In weaker responses, candidates tended to outline an example of globalisation and generally made less relevant links to the impact that globalisation processes has on shaping beliefs. In these responses, candidates often did not support their understanding with an appropriate example. They often neglected to address all the components of the question, and instead, focused on describing an example of globalisation rather than making a judgment about how these processes of globalisation influence beliefs held by others.

### **Question 17**

In better responses, candidates clearly outlined one inequality within a particular society and referred to an example to support their answer.

In weaker responses, candidates identified a general inequality but didn't relate it to a society.

In general, responses were unnecessarily long. Candidates should use the mark value of the question as a guide to the length required.

### **Question 18**

In better responses, candidates clearly showed why and/or how conflict and cooperation influence social inequality in one society. In these responses, candidates demonstrated a clear understanding of the concepts of conflict and cooperation. These candidates identified examples of conflict and related them to course concepts effectively. They showed how different types of conflict can reduce access to socially valued resources and how various forms of cooperation can help to reduce inequality in one society.

In weaker responses, candidates showed a misunderstanding of one or both concepts or provided limited information for one concept only. In these responses, candidates tended to focus on examples of inequality only, were simplistic and generalised and tended not to address the question explicitly. In weaker responses, candidates provided limited use of examples, course concepts and language.

### **Question 19**

In the best responses, candidates clearly understood the term 'institutionalised' and demonstrated a high level of understanding of how inequalities are institutionalised in society. In these responses, candidates identified the importance of access to socially valued resources as a way to improve equality in society and linked this to the role of institutions in providing that access. In better responses, candidates identified and made valid judgements about key institutions such as the government, media, education, health and family in relation to social inequality in society.

In better responses, candidates used appropriate examples and relevant statistics that clearly demonstrated the extent to which inequality is institutionalised. These candidates also consistently integrated appropriate equality and difference concepts and terminology and communicated in a logical and well-structured manner.

In weaker responses, candidates misunderstood the term 'institutionalised' and referred to institutions that reduce inequality only or the benefits of institutionalising inequality. These responses were often descriptive and repetitive. In weaker responses, candidates generally made a limited judgement about inequality being institutionalised, but this was often simplistic in its assertions.

### **Question 20**

In better responses, candidates outlined the concept ‘alienation’ and supported this with a suitable example.

In weaker responses, candidates used examples that were not relevant to the concept, or not related to work or leisure.

### **Question 21**

In better responses, candidates explained the complex interrelationship between work and status, including how once attained, status and privilege can be maintained through education.

In most responses, candidates identified a relationship between work and status, although some confused status with class.

In weaker responses, candidates merely identified that higher status came directly from higher income.

### **Question 22**

In better responses, candidates discussed the social construct of gender and the associated stereotypes and their implications for aspirations and opportunities for leisure. In these responses, candidates also made judgments about the continuities and changes in gender equality.

In weaker responses, candidates tended to be descriptive, identified some different preferences in leisure, and focused on micro examples of the impact of gender expectations within society.

## **Section III – Depth Studies**

### **Question 23 – Popular Culture**

In better responses, candidates linked the role of the media to both continuity and change within one popular culture. They used a range of specific examples and applied course concepts, such as perpetuation, consumption, mythology and institutional power.

In weaker responses, candidates presented a historical description of the role of the development of one popular culture, and made some superficial references to the media. Candidates often drew on limited or inappropriate focus studies that provided them with few opportunities to make meaningful comments about continuity and change. In these responses, candidates relied on focus studies that were either relatively recent developments like social media, where it is difficult to identify examples of continuity and change, or were themselves forms of media like television, making it difficult for candidates to construct logical and sustained responses. Some weaker responses also seemed to have been rote-learned and did not adequately address the specific question asked.

### **Question 24 – Belief Systems**

In better responses, candidates wrote well-developed and logical explanations of the impact that technology has had on both continuity and of change in ONE belief system. In these responses, candidates were cohesive throughout and effectively applied related concepts from the belief systems depth study to clarify their understanding. They linked ways in which various technologies have created continuity and enabled change to features of their chosen belief system. These better responses were sustained and well supported with relevant evidence and examples, and integrated strong judgments which demonstrated an insight and



thorough understanding of the relationship between technology and the impact it is making on belief systems.

In weaker responses, candidates tended to demonstrate a limited understanding of the impact of technology in the continuity and change to belief systems. These responses were often general in nature and lacked application of concepts. In these responses, candidates recognised and described a variety of ways in which technology can interact with a belief system, but the development of their assessment was limited. Often in these responses, candidates focused on change within the belief system rather than engaging in all of the requirements of the question. They tended to describe an example of technological use in the belief system as the focus in their response and used related concepts in a superficial manner.

### **Question 25 – Equality and Difference**

In better responses, candidates demonstrated a thorough understanding of the role of power and authority in achieving desirable outcomes for all persons in one society. In these responses, candidates clearly distinguished between the concepts of power and authority, and provided clear examples of the power of individuals, groups and institutions in achieving desirable outcomes. In some of the better responses, candidates identified how power and authority can both promote and limit the achievement of desirable outcomes in one society.

In better responses, candidates clearly identified desirable outcomes as having equal access to socially valued resources and provided a range of relevant examples to support this from within one society. In addition, in better responses, candidates clearly understood the directive term ‘analyse’, and thus were effectively able to relate the implications of the relationship between power and authority to achieving desirable outcomes in one society. A range of other appropriate course concepts and terms, such as social differentiation, egalitarianism and discrimination were effectively applied to the question. A high degree of social and cultural literacy was evident in logical, sustained and well-structured responses.

In weaker responses, candidates confused the meaning of the concepts ‘power’ and ‘authority’ and most often used these terms interchangeably or collectively. In these responses, candidates relied too heavily on a rote-learned response that did not address the question. These responses were generalised and descriptive, not sustained and lacked sufficient course concepts and content knowledge of a society.

### **Question 26 – Work and Leisure**

In better responses, candidates explained the influence of a range of organisations, groups and social institutions on access to work and leisure. These included government, unions, class, gender and education.

In weaker responses, candidates tended to identify examples relating to an individual’s own level of power and authority, without acknowledging powers and authorities external to the individual.