HSIE- Society and Culture
Exam preparation transcript

(Duration 26 minutes 56 seconds)

Welcome to the HSC Hub presentation for society and culture. This presentation will take approximately 20 minutes.

Before we begin, I would like to pay my respect and acknowledge the traditional custodians of all of the lands on which we are meeting and also pay respect to Elders both past and present.

This HSIE HSC Hub video has been designed to support you in your preparation for the society and culture HSC exam. This video will include an introductory look at the layout and structure of the exam, some tips on preparing for the exam before the big day, and a deeper look at the exam section by section with some discussion of specific past paper questions and feedback from the marking centre. The key message that we can send you to help you prepare for your exam is that to prepare well, you need to have a strong grasp of the syllabus, content, and concepts. Know your syllabus and use the dot points to guide your study notes. You also need to spend time practicing the ways to respond to different types of questions. Cramming or studying just before the exam will not be as effective as a long-term study approach. And at the end of the day, you need to know a lot about the society and culture topics that you have studied to be able to write about them in an exam setting. So wide reading and engaging with the content deeply is a key to success.

If you haven't already done so, make sure you download the HSC examination timetable and highlight all of your exams. The 2020 HSC examination timetable can be found on the NESA website. The society and culture exam will be held on day eight, which is Thursday, the 29th of October in the afternoon from 1:55 p.m. till 4:00 p.m. Make sure that you manage your time and travel so that you can arrive with plenty of time to be seated before your exam begins. Also make sure you're familiar with the rules and procedures for your HSC exams. These can be found on the NESA website under the rules and procedures guide. One important rule and procedure to follow is that you must remain in the examination room for a minimum of one hour, and you will not be permitted to leave in the last 30 minutes. This is to minimise disruption at the end of the exam period. Once you leave the exam room, you won't be permitted to re-enter, so we strongly advise that you remain for the duration of the examination period.

Plan your HSC revision schedule to match up with your exams. You should have a regular study routine that you are following to keep up with coursework. Continue to study and revise each of your subjects. However, in the days before the exams, you may need to give a little more emphasis to the exams that you'll complete first. As you complete exams, the time that you would've spent on those subjects can then be allocated to exams yet to come. Remember, revision and exam preparation are crucial to you performing to the best of your ability. The key to your revision is to know your syllabus. Ensure that you're familiar with all of the syllabus dot points and syllabus language. Questions can be drawn from any part of the syllabus and will use the language of the syllabus.

Also, you should make sure that you get a good night's sleep before each exam. Late nights will harm your performance. Last-minute cramming is okay, but not at the expense of sleep. Your brain needs time to rest, and you'll be able to engage better with questions if you're not physically and mentally exhausted. You want to arrive at your exams refreshed and in a positive frame of mind. Similarly, on the day, please make sure that you eat. Studies have shown that eating a healthy breakfast and remaining hydrated will help improve your examination results. As this is an afternoon exam, a healthy lunch will also help with your concentration. Remember to stay well hydrated, drinking plenty of water before and during the exam, which is a key to keep your brain functioning at its optimum.

Lastly, make sure that you have all of your equipment ready. Pack it up in a clear pencil case or plastic sleeve the night before so that you aren't rushing and forget something on the day of the exam. So, what exactly are you allowed to bring into your society and culture exam? To start with, you should be writing in black pen. Make sure you bring multiple pens in case one of them runs out of ink. It's important to use black pen as exam papers or scanned to allow for onscreen marking. Lighter-coloured pens may not scan as well, and this will make it difficult for the marker reading your response. For society and culture, other useful additional materials you may also bring include highlighters to highlight key parts of a question, pencils, which should be at least 2B, a sharpener, and a bottle of water in a clear bottle. All of these items can be found relatively cheaply at stationery stores, news agents, or most supermarkets. Don't wait until the last minute to find these items. You should be using them throughout your course. Remember, you are not allowed to borrow equipment during the HSC examination, so it is very important to make sure that you have what you need. You should place all of your items in a clear plastic sealable pencil case before entering the room.

You can wear your watch to your exams, but once you sit down, you'll have to take it off and place it in clear view on your desk. Programmable watches, including smart watches, will not be allowed in the exam room. Make sure you're familiar with the rules and procedures for the HSC exam. These can be found on the NESA website. There are also things that are definitely not allowed in the exam room. These include a mobile phone, a programmable watch, including smart watches, any electronic device, paper, or any printed or written material. You can ask your presiding officer for working paper if you need something to make notes on. You also cannot bring print dictionaries or correction fluid.

Let's have a look at the exam layout. What is your exam actually going to look like when you walk into the society and culture HSC? On the day of your exam, you'll be presented with a paper that consists of two sections. The first section is a combination of multiple choice and short answers. It's worth 20 marks, and you should allow around 40 minutes to complete this section. This section covers the core, social and cultural community and change. In section II, you'll be presented with four questions, one on each of the depth studies. You only need to complete two questions on the depth studies that you completed in class. Each question is made up of a part a worth five marks and a part b worth 15 marks. As you'll complete two, this section's therefore worth 40 marks in total. You should allow yourself one hour and 20 minutes to complete this section, so roughly 40 minutes per depth study. The society and culture exam is worth a total of 60 marks, and you'll have five minutes' reading time. You cannot write during this time, but you may wish to start planning your extended responses. And then two hours of writing time for you to complete the paper to the best of your ability. You must remain in the examination room for the first hour, and you won't be permitted to leave in the last 30 minutes.

Let's look at section I. Section I of the society and culture exam covers the core topic, social and cultural continuity and change. It traditionally consists of eight multiple choice questions worth one mark each. Multiple choice questions in the HSC are changing. They're no longer simply about memory but focus also on the application of knowledge. Make sure you read the question very carefully, dissecting each key term and phrase. They focus on higher-order thinking and require the evaluation of all alternatives. Most of the options to choose from will include distractors designed to target common mistakes and simple thinking. Make sure you answer all eight multiple choice questions. Please don't leave any out. Use the process of elimination and choose the answer that best fits the question. Keep in mind, some questions may provide stimulus material for you to apply your knowledge. Make sure that you mark your answers on the multiple-choice answer sheet provided. A great way to practice your multiple-choice section is to use the NESA quiz tool. You can find it by searching for NESA quiz or following the link on the supplementary resource for this video. When using the NESA quiz tool, keep in mind that the latest society and culture syllabus was implemented in 2015, so there might be slight variations in the terminology and content used in earlier HSC exams.

The next component of section I are the short answer questions, which will be worth a total of 12 marks. Like the multiple-choice questions, the skills and knowledge covered may include concepts including fundamental, additional, and related, and your understanding of how to apply the concepts using examples, research methods and how you might apply them to a stimulus provided, social change in continuity and analysing how and why they occurred using appropriate examples. They could also cover other dot points like resistance to change and social theories and how they help to explain how change has occurred. Lastly, the focus study, know your country study. Keep in mind, though, that this will still be a short response, no more than 10 marks. So, make sure you're able to use your focus study to support your understanding of the concepts and content of the core. In past papers, you'll find that half of the short answer marks are generally from the focus study question.

The general feedback from the 2019 marking centre about section I of the society and culture exam was that it was vital for students to understand exactly what the key words in the question were asking of them and that they could smoothly integrate relevant society and culture terminology into their responses. They also noted the importance of planning any extended responses in the answer booklet with a simple heading of ‘plan’ to allow the marker to see the structure and flow of the intended response to the question. The importance of logical and cohesive responses was also highlighted along with the inclusion of relevant examples where appropriate. This is important to note. The words relevant and appropriate are very important in most marking criteria for HSC HSIE subjects and can mean the difference between bands. Ensuring the examples and ideas that you include in your responses are relevant is crucial to success.

Let's have a look at an example from the 2019 HSC paper. Question 10, "discuss the role of tradition in the rate and direction of change in one country." Looking at this example, it's clearly a concepts-based question on the focus study, your country study, for social and cultural continuity and change. To answer this question, you need to determine the key directive verb, underlined in blue. In this question it's ‘discuss’, which means to identify issues and provide points for and/or against. The next thing you do is find out the subject of the question, in this case, ‘one country’. You need to address the one country that you've studied, and this will demonstrate your understanding and linkages between the concepts, which are circled in red. In this question, these are the role of traditions and the concept of change, specifically the rate and direction of change for the country that you've studied. Going through the question and breaking it down like this is a good strategy to ensure that you're reading the whole question in full and understanding what it's asking you to do. It's important to remember that for Section I and the core, you need to understand key words of the questions, integrate your society and culture terminology, the language of the course, and apply these to the questions. Remember to use your contemporary issues and examples to support your response. At least one of the short answer questions will address your focus study for the core, so the country that you've studied.

Use your reading time effectively to plan your questions as you need to be straight to the point in this section. You'll need to answer this, the questions in the space provided, and this will give you an indication of the length of your response. It's also important to use the marking criteria and sample answers provided from past papers when you're preparing for your exam. These can be found on the NESA website, which is given in the supplementary resource for this video. Engaging with the marking criteria will give you an understanding of what the examiners are looking for in different types of questions and help you to understand the way the different levels are divided. Make sure that you read this in conjunction with the notes from the marking centre.

In the 2019 society and culture exam for question 10, the notes from the marking centre demonstrated that the better responses were seen when students were able to explicitly identify a tradition within one country and qualify the rate and change, for example, moving towards slowly, rapidly, increased by transformative or evolutionary as examples. They were also able to support their responses with relevant and specific examples that demonstrated the role of tradition and integrate other appropriate concepts, such as westernisation, society, culture, globalisation, and change. Some areas that were identified for improvement were for students to avoid a narrative about a change in a country, so not just telling a story and being descriptive about the country. They also pointed out that applying appropriate examples to help gain clarity in the response, for example, the use of statistics was an important factor. These key notes from the marking centre can help you when you're studying for society and culture as they give a roadmap to how to ensure your responses to practice questions are clear, knowledgeable, and linked to the syllabus content.

Let's look at another example from section I, this time from the 2018 society and culture exam. We'll look at question 9, which is worth only four marks and provides a stimulus, which is boxed in black. The stimulus reads, "A school principal has proposed increasing the number of hours of school sport for each student." The question that you need to answer in response to the stimulus is, "justify the use of one research method to investigate parents' views about the proposal." To respond to this question, you need to first determine the key verb, underlined in blue, which is justify, which means support an argument or conclusion. Next is the content, which I've circled. You need to address one research method that you've studied and then apply this to the subject, which is the curved box, which in this case is the parents' views. Thus, to respond well to this question, you're expected to name one research method that could be used to find out the views of parents around school sport hours and justify why your chosen method would be appropriate in the provided content. Breaking the questions down like this allows you to process each part and ensure that you're reading the whole question in full and understanding what it's asking you to do. Doing this allows you to think and focus on the best way to respond before you put your pen to paper.

Taking a look at the marking criteria for this question will give us an understanding of what the examiners are looking for. This marking criteria highlights that in order to achieve the full four marks for the question, students need to clearly support the use of one appropriate research method, apply the characteristics of one appropriate research method to the scenario, and present a coherent response that effectively applies relevant course language. Notice the words relevant and appropriate making an appearance again here. The key is to ensure that your example is chosen to suit the context and content outlined in the question. The notes from the NESA marking centre for this question highlighted that in better responses, students were able to choose an appropriate research method from the syllabus to demonstrate their knowledge and support their choice of research method by making strong links between the features of the research method and the scenario. They were also be able to integrate relevant course concepts and language into their response and to create a logical response using the lines allocated as a guide to the length of their response. Areas that were identified for improvement included integrating relevant course concepts and making links between all areas of the question rather than simply creating a narrative.

Moving on, let's look at section II of the society and culture exam, which covers the depth studies. In this section, you'll be presented with four questions, and you only need to answer two questions from this section. Keep in mind that there are two parts to each question, part a, which will be worth five marks, and part b, which will be worth 15 marks. Answer both parts independently of each other. They're not necessarily related except that the questions and relevant syllabus dot points come from the same depth study. Also make sure that you answer both parts for both depth studies you choose to answer. This is a simple mistake that we see too often. You'll write your extended responses in the Section II writing booklet provided. Start each question on a new page. For this section, NESA suggests a total of six pages, or 800 words for each question/depth study in this section. If you need extra booklets, raise your hand, and one of the examination supervisors will provide you with one. Remember, choose the two depth studies that you've studied in class. Even if you think the questions look easier from another depth study, you've not studied them, and you'll probably not address the syllabus dot points or use the related concepts or terminology required to answer the question appropriately.

The feedback from the marking centre for the 2019 exam said that students in section II should be mindful of the suggested word length for their response and aim to achieve a flow of connected ideas in the space provided. They should also draw on conceptually driven knowledge to respond to the question given, aiming to demonstrate both depth and range of course understanding. This is important to note. Answers to these questions must respond to the question given, which is a subtle way of saying that pre-prepared responses are not the best way to go. Let's look more closely at one depth study question from the 2019 exam paper, question 11. We'll go with the popular culture question as this is the most popular depth study. Remember that part a is the five-mark response, so you'll need to write approximately 200 to 300 words or three quarters to one page of the writing booklet. The writing booklets are not the same as A4 pages, and everyone's writing style and size is different. So that's very general advice. Spend some time talking to your teacher about what this might look like in your handwriting as they're best placed to know. Be straight to the point when answering this part of the question. There's no need for an introductory paragraph or conclusion as it's a five-mark question.

So, part a is on the focus study and integrated concepts. The question is, “account for groups rejecting the ideology of one popular culture”. Remember that teachers use different focus studies to help students understand the depth study. For example, hip-hop or teen movies could be used as the focus study for popular culture. The directive verb in this question is account for, which is underlined in blue, which means to state reasons for or report on. The integrated concept circled in red is the groups rejecting the ideology of the subject, which is boxed in blue. That is your focus study used in popular culture. You can see how this question is derived from one dot point from the syllabus, the different perceptions of the popular culture, and specifically the dash point, groups that accept and reject the popular culture. To answer this question well, you need to be sure to be clear about the popular culture that you're referring to and give clear reasons for groups rejecting the ideology of that popular culture. Structure your ideas well with a clear topic sentence, explanation, specific examples, and concluding sentence for this part. Make sure you're answering the question using relevant concepts throughout your response. You should spend about 10 minutes for Part a.

Part b is worth 15 marks. The question is, “explain how stakeholders can affect the future directions for one popular culture”. We can see that this question is on the focus study in the near future, five to 10 years. Make sure you read the rubric specifically for part b when you're preparing for your exam. This provides you with guidance as to the marking criteria that the examiners are going to use to mark your response. As you write your response, it's important that you refer back to the rubric frequently to ensure that you are demonstrating the knowledge and understanding the response requires. For part b, you need to make sure that you know your key verbs and the depth and requirements of the key verbs needed to answer the response. Make sure your answer meets the requirements of the key verb. This is where practice on how to answer the question is important. Read the question carefully. Identify the key verb. In this case, it's explain, which according to the NESA website is to relate cause and effect, make the relationships between things evident, provide why and/or how. Note which syllabus dot points the question is referring to and consider which content and concepts you need to address in relation to your depth study. In this case, we're looking at the dot point the stakeholders, circled in red, and how they influence popular culture, family, peer groups, media, marketers, governments, global groups, and another dot point from the near future, five to 10 years, and in particular, how stakeholders can affect future decision directions, also circled in red, of the focus study in popular culture you studied.

Make sure you plan your extended response using the planning page including each paragraph. Your introduction should answer the question and provide an outline of the points that you'll use in the body. In each of your paragraphs, provide a topic sentence and explanation of your idea, apply specific examples, and make sure you always link each paragraph back to the question. Finally, you should finish off with your conclusion where you sum up your response. Don't introduce any new points in the conclusion. Think about what specific examples you're going to apply and use relevant course concepts, in particular, the related depth study concepts throughout your response. Remember, your school may have different paragraph scaffolds that you might be familiar with, for example, PEEL or TEEL. This is something that you should work with your society and culture teacher on as they are the expert in your learning needs for this subject. You should spend roughly 30 minutes on writing for part b.

Looking at the marking criteria for part a, account for groups rejecting the ideology of one popular culture, we can see that the marking centre was looking for in response to the question. We can see that to get to full marks, students needed to be clear in their response they provide, cohesive in their response, and effective in the application of relevant examples, course concepts, and language. The comments from the 2019 marking centre for part a of section II outlined that in better responses, students were able to show a clear understanding of the ideology of the popular culture and reasons for the rejection of that ideology by specified groups. They could also apply course concepts and language, for example, beliefs, values, and traditions, and a range of examples at the micro, meso, and macro level. The better responses directly addressed the question in a well-structured, succinct, and cohesive response.

Areas that were noted for students to improve in the marking notes included using one popular culture as opposed to popular culture in general. This is a key example of making sure to read the question properly. They also mentioned that establishing the ideology of that popular culture would've improved many results. We can see similar notes in the marking criteria for part b of the question, explain how stakeholders can affect the future directions of one popular culture. The importance of supporting the response with detailed, accurate information and appropriate examples is clear as is presenting a sustained, logical, and cohesive response. This indicates that the length of the response is going to be longer than in part a, and the inclusion of 'sustained' shows that there is an expectation of a response that is connected and clear in the way it fits together.

The marking centre feedback for this question from the 2019 exam shows that in better responses, students were able to provide a detailed and coherent response that clearly addressed a future or a possible future for each example stakeholder and could apply a range of stakeholders in the response, making a judgment as to which was more likely to impact the future directions of the popular culture. They could also explain each stakeholder and their role and apply a wide range of relevant and accurate examples using qualifying terms to make an informed judgment about the future. Better responses addressed the implications, both positive and negative, of the potential future and applied concepts such as micro, meso, and macro, successfully integrating a range of examples related to each concept. Finally, the better responses integrated contemporary issues and concepts in order to determine potential future directions. Areas for students to improve that were noted in the marking notes include identifying the groups and reasons for rejecting the ideology as well as making sure to sustain a coherent argument in the introduction and throughout the response and moving beyond the historical narrative of the development of the selected popular culture or stakeholder and addressing explicitly future directions. Finally, to improve, students should support their argument with relevant, appropriate, and contemporary examples. The last piece of advice we would like to give is to make sure that you ask your teacher if you're having difficulties in any of these areas, especially if you are having trouble accessing past papers or marking guidelines from the NESA website.

Remember, any specific questions and assistance you need in helping to prepare you for your exams, your teacher is your go-to person. You see them every day at school, and they are the expert. So, make sure you practice past HSC papers and ask your teachers to provide feedback on them. They'll be more than happy to do this for you. Other resources you may want to look out for are the 2016 HSC Society and Culture Exam workbook produced by NESA, which provides sample responses across the different bands. And lastly, check out the online HSC Hub through the Department of Education's website where you'll find access to third-party providers, study notes, videos, and tips from other teachers and HSC markers.

Best wishes as you prepare for your HSC exams.

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