

# **SOCIAL STUDIES SYLLABUS**

## **UPPER SECONDARY**

### **EXPRESS COURSE**

### **NORMAL (ACADEMIC) COURSE**

**Implementation starting with  
2016 Secondary Three Cohort**



**Ministry of Education**  
SINGAPORE

© 2016 Curriculum Planning and Development Division.

This publication is not for sale. All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced without the prior permission of the Ministry of Education, Singapore.

# CONTENTS

---

	<b>Page</b>
<b>1. INTRODUCTION</b>	
• Philosophy of Social Studies	2
• Curriculum Aims	3
<b>2. CONTENT</b>	
• Design of the Syllabus	4
• Using the Detailed Syllabus Content	6
• Detailed Syllabus Content	8
<b>3. RECOMMENDED PEDAGOGY: INQUIRY-BASED LEARNING</b>	
• Translating the Humanities Inquiry Approach into the Social Studies Classroom	14
<b>4. ASSESSMENT</b>	
• Purpose of Assessment	18
• Modes of Assessment	18
• Scheme of Assessment	22

# 1. INTRODUCTION

---

## Philosophy of Social Studies

At the heart of the Singapore Social Studies Curriculum is the preparation of students to be citizens of tomorrow by helping them to better understand the interconnectedness of Singapore and the world they live in, and appreciate the complexities of the human experience. Drawing on aspects of society that are of meaning and interest to the students, Social Studies seeks to ignite students' curiosity to inquire into real-world issues that concern their lives. Through inquiry and authentic learning experiences, Social Studies helps students to attain relevant knowledge and understanding about these issues, develop critical and reflective thinking skills, and appreciate multiple perspectives.

Social Studies seeks to inculcate in students a deeper understanding of the values that define the Singapore society, nurture dispositions that will inspire them to show concern for the society and the world they live in, and demonstrate empathy in their relationships with others. The Curriculum therefore envisions students as informed, concerned and participative citizens, competent in decision-making with an impassioned spirit to contribute responsibly to the society and world they live in.



Figure 1 The Singapore Social Studies Curriculum

## Curriculum Aims

Social Studies seeks to develop the competencies of our students to be informed, concerned and participative citizens by the end of a 10-year Social Studies education. These competencies encompass the body of knowledge, skills and values expressed in the Philosophy of Social Studies and they are elaborated below.

As ***informed*** citizens, students would:

- understand their identity as Singaporeans with a global outlook;
- understand different perspectives;
- view the world with an understanding of the Singapore perspective;
- apply reflective thought in making quality decisions;
- analyse, negotiate and manage complex situations; and
- evaluate information, consider different viewpoints and exercise discernment in reaching well-reasoned conclusions and making responsible decisions.

As ***concerned*** citizens, students would:

- have a sense of belonging to their community and nation;
- appreciate the importance of engaging in issues of societal concern;
- be committed to building social cohesion by appreciating diversity in society; and
- have an awareness of the ethical considerations and consequences of decision-making.

As ***participative*** citizens, students would:

- be motivated to identify issues of concern and take action;
- be resilient in addressing concerns of the community or society in spite of challenges faced; and
- be empowered to take personal and collective responsibility for effecting change for the good of society, and serve to make a positive difference to others.

## 2. CONTENT

---

### Design of the Syllabus

In designing the Syllabus, the following principles were considered:

- To align with the Desired Outcomes of Education to nurture committed citizens ready to lead and contribute to Singapore, and to develop an informed and active citizenry committed to the well-being of the society and nation.
- To align with the outcomes and intent of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Competencies and Character and Citizenship Education.
- To align with the 'Head, Heart, Hands' framework for National Education so that Social Studies would move beyond accumulation of knowledge and towards engaging the young, developing their emotional bonds to Singapore and helping them to internalise the social values that would move them to act responsibly and contribute to society.
- To update knowledge, skills and values so that the Syllabus remains current and relevant.
- To align with the Primary Social Studies syllabus.
- To align across all levels and all courses to provide coherence in the curriculum structure.
- To reinforce the relevance and value of Social Studies in students' everyday lives.
- To promote the use of engaging pedagogies and prevent content overloading, by providing a good balance of content and skills.
- To provide students with the opportunity to demonstrate their understanding and commitment to the shared values through the use of alternative modes of assessment.

For further information on:

- the Desired Outcomes of Education, please refer to <http://www.moe.gov.sg/education/desired-outcomes/>
- the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Competencies, please refer to <http://www.moe.gov.sg/education/21cc/>
- Character and Citizenship Education, please refer to <http://www.moe.gov.sg/education/syllabuses/character-citizenship-education/files/2014-character-citizenship-education-secondary.pdf>
- National Education, please refer to <http://ne.moe.edu.sg/ne/slot/u223/ne/index.html>

The Social Studies syllabus content is organised around three Issues and is anchored in a set of Knowledge, Skills and Values Outcomes. The three Issues correspond to societal issues that have been shaping Singapore society and the world and were selected with these considerations in mind:

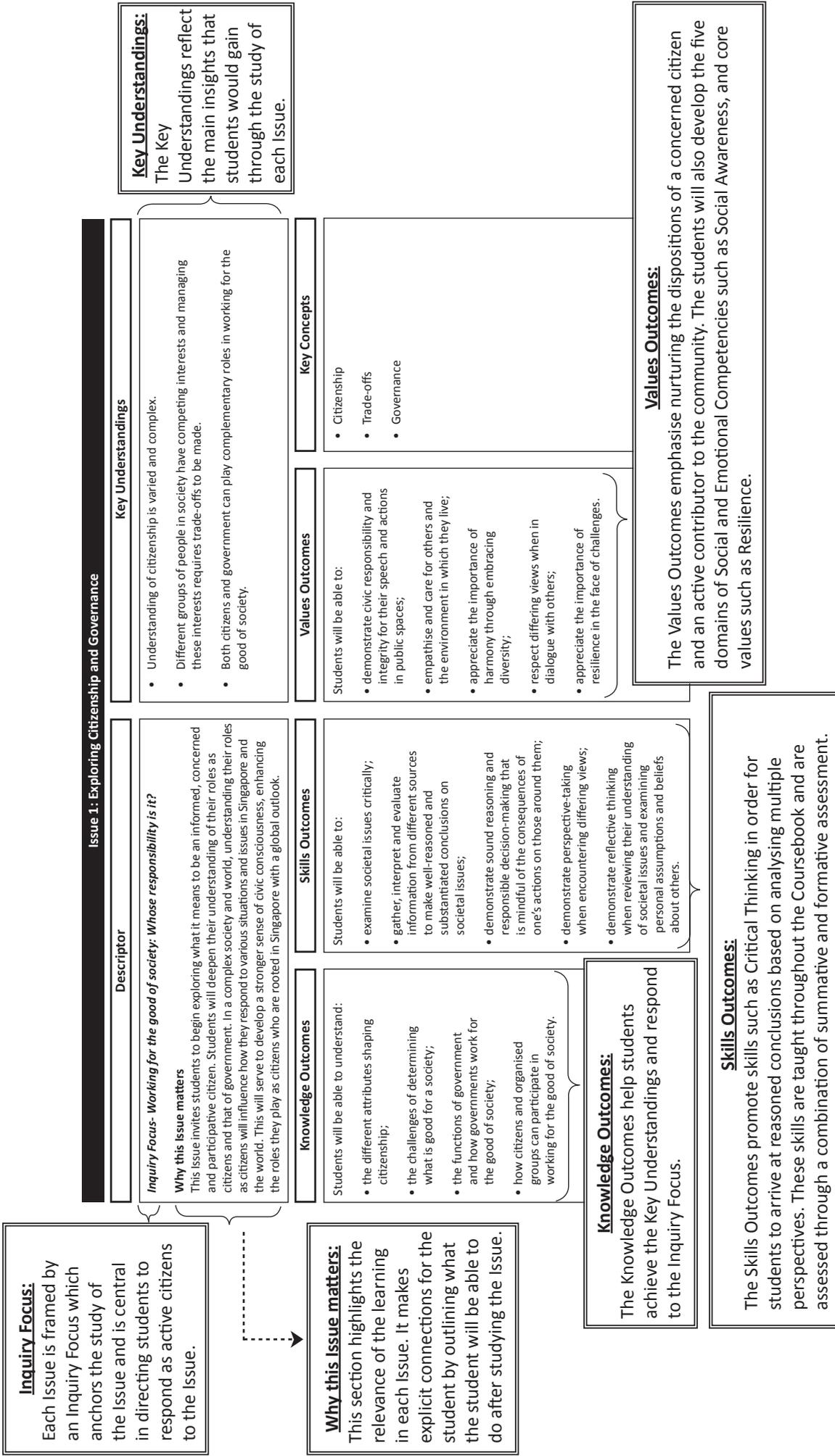
- The need to respond to the ‘new diversities’ in society.
- The need to strengthen the heart of an economically vibrant nation.
- The need to grow an informed, concerned and participative citizenry.

The knowledge, skills and values acquired through a study of these Issues will enable students to enrich and deploy their competencies to respond to real world issues and in the process, strengthen their values as citizens. The following table shows the three Issues, each organised around an Inquiry Focus, which provides a frame for students to inquire and respond to the Issue and related issues.

<b>Empowering Individuals, Enriching Society</b>
<p><b>Issue 1: Exploring Citizenship and Governance</b></p> <p><i>Inquiry Focus</i> - Working for the good of society: Whose responsibility is it?</p> <p><i>Guiding Questions:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What does it mean for me to be a citizen of my country?</li> <li>2. How do we decide on what is good for society?</li> <li>3. How can we work for the good of society?</li> </ol>
<p><b>Issue 2: Living in a Diverse Society</b></p> <p><i>Inquiry Focus</i> - Living in a diverse society: Is harmony achievable?</p> <p><i>Guiding Questions:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What is diversity?</li> <li>2. Why is there greater diversity in Singapore now?</li> <li>3. What are the experiences and effects of living in a diverse society?</li> <li>4. How can we respond in a diverse society?</li> </ol>
<p><b>Issue 3: Being Part of a Globalised World</b></p> <p><i>Inquiry Focus</i> - Being part of a globalised world: Is it necessarily good?</p> <p><i>Guiding Questions:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What does it mean to live in a globalised world?</li> <li>2. How do we respond to tensions arising from some economic impacts of globalisation?</li> <li>3. How do we respond to tensions arising from some cultural impacts of globalisation?</li> <li>4. How do we respond to tensions arising from some security impacts of globalisation?</li> </ol>

**Figure 2 Summary of the three Issues**

## Using the Detailed Syllabus Content



**Guiding Questions**

1. What does it mean for me to be a citizen of my country?
2. How do we decide on what is good for society?
3. How can we work for the good of society?

**Content**

- Attributes shaping citizenship
  - legal status
  - a sense of identity
  - participation in public affairs
- Competing needs and interests
  - managing trade-offs
- Functions of government
  - rule-making, rule execution and rule adjudication
- Role of government in working for the good of society
  - maintaining internal order and external security
  - ensuring justice
  - providing goods and services for the public
  - safeguarding interests of citizens
- Role of citizens in working for the good of society
  - avenues of citizen participation
    - o channels of communication between citizens and government
    - o individual participation
    - o organised groups
  - outcomes of public participation
    - o contributing to needs of society
    - o influencing government decisions
    - o strengthening citizens' sense of belonging

**Core Content:**  
Content of each Issue is scoped to make the learning of content manageable for students.

**Guiding Questions:**  
The Guiding Questions guide students' progressive understanding of the Issue. Placing these questions alongside the content show teachers how to facilitate student learning using the inquiry approach. The Guiding Questions also help to provide focus to facilitate the achievement of Knowledge Outcomes.

## Detailed Syllabus Content

### Issue 1: Exploring Citizenship and Governance

Descriptor	Key Understandings
<p><b>Inquiry Focus - Working for the good of society: <i>Whose responsibility is it?</i></b></p> <p><b>Why this issue matters</b> This Issue invites students to begin exploring what it means to be an informed, concerned and participative citizen. Students will deepen their understanding of their roles as citizens and that of government. In a complex society and world, understanding their roles as citizens will influence how they respond to various situations and issues in Singapore and the world. This will serve to develop a stronger sense of civic consciousness, enhancing the roles they play as citizens who are rooted in Singapore with a global outlook.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understanding of citizenship is varied and complex.</li> <li>• Different groups of people in society have competing interests and managing these interests requires trade-offs to be made.</li> <li>• Both citizens and government can play complementary roles in working for the good of society.</li> </ul>
Knowledge Outcomes	Values Outcomes
<p>Students will be able to understand:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the different attributes shaping citizenship;</li> <li>• the challenges of determining what is good for a society;</li> <li>• the functions of government and how governments work for the good of society;</li> <li>• how citizens and organised groups can participate in working for the good of society.</li> </ul>	<p>Students will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• demonstrate civic responsibility and integrity for their speech and actions in public spaces;</li> <li>• empathise and care for others and the environment in which they live;</li> <li>• appreciate the importance of harmony through embracing diversity;</li> <li>• respect differing views when in dialogue with others;</li> <li>• appreciate the importance of resilience in the face of challenges.</li> </ul>
Skills Outcomes	Key Concepts
<p>Students will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• examine societal issues critically;</li> <li>• gather, interpret and evaluate information from different sources to make well-reasoned and substantiated conclusions on societal issues;</li> <li>• demonstrate sound reasoning and responsible decision-making that is mindful of the consequences of one's actions on those around them;</li> <li>• demonstrate perspective-taking when encountering differing views;</li> <li>• demonstrate reflective thinking when reviewing their understanding of societal issues and examining personal assumptions and beliefs about others.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Citizenship</li> <li>• Trade-offs</li> <li>• Governance</li> </ul>

## Guiding Questions

1. What does it mean for me to be a citizen of my country?
2. How do we decide on what is good for society?
3. How can we work for the good of society?

## Content

- Attributes shaping citizenship
  - legal status
  - a sense of identity
  - participation in public affairs
- Competing needs and interests
  - managing trade-offs
- Functions of government
  - rule-making, rule execution and rule adjudication
- Role of government in working for the good of society
  - maintaining internal order and external security
  - ensuring justice
  - providing goods and services for the public
  - safeguarding interests of citizens
- Role of citizens in working for the good of society
  - avenues of citizen participation
    - o channels of communication between citizens and government
    - o individual participation
    - o organised groups
  - outcomes of public participation
    - o contributing to needs of society
    - o influencing government decisions
    - o strengthening citizens' sense of belonging

## Issue 2: Living in a Diverse Society

Descriptor	Key Understandings
<p><b><i>Inquiry Focus- Living in a diverse society: Is harmony achievable?</i></b></p> <p><b>Why this Issue matters</b> This Issue helps students appreciate diversity and the importance of harmony. Students will develop an understanding of who they are as individuals and accept, respect and celebrate diversity as well as common practices and values in a diverse society. This will heighten students' awareness of the need to develop personal and collective responsibility in promoting and maintaining harmony in a diverse society.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identities are diverse and complex.</li> <li>• Living harmoniously in a diverse society means respecting our differences and appreciating what we share in common.</li> <li>• We can choose how we respond to diversity in our society.</li> </ul>
Knowledge Outcomes	Values Outcomes
<p>Students will be able to understand:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the factors that shape identities;</li> <li>• the reasons for greater diversity in Singapore;</li> <li>• the experiences and effects of living in a diverse society;</li> <li>• the various ways in which governments and individuals can respond to the effects of living in a diverse society.</li> </ul>	<p>Students will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• demonstrate civic responsibility and integrity for their speech and actions in public spaces;</li> <li>• empathise and care for others and the environment in which they live;</li> <li>• appreciate the importance of harmony through embracing diversity;</li> <li>• respect differing views when in dialogue with others;</li> <li>• appreciate the importance of resilience in the face of challenges.</li> </ul>
Skills Outcomes	Key Concepts
<p>Students will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• examine societal issues critically;</li> <li>• gather, interpret and evaluate information from different sources to make well-reasoned and substantiated conclusions on societal issues;</li> <li>• demonstrate sound reasoning and responsible decision-making that is mindful of the consequences of one's actions on those around them;</li> <li>• demonstrate perspective-taking when encountering differing views;</li> <li>• demonstrate reflective thinking when reviewing their understanding of societal issues and examining personal assumptions and beliefs about others.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identity</li> <li>• Diversity</li> <li>• Harmony</li> <li>• Assimilation</li> <li>• Integration</li> </ul>

### Guiding Questions

1. What is diversity?
2. Why is there greater diversity in Singapore now?
3. What are the experiences and effects of living in a diverse society?
4. How can we respond in a diverse society?

### Content

- Different factors that shape identity and contribute to a diverse society
  - nationality
  - race and ethnicity
  - religion
  - socio-economic status
- Reasons for movement of people to Singapore
  - immigration policy
  - economic opportunities
  - socio-cultural environment
- Experiences and effects of living in a diverse society
  - socio-cultural diversity
    - o cultural exchange and appreciation
    - o prejudice and misconceptions
  - socio-economic diversity
    - o exchange and appreciation of ideas, skills and experiences
    - o competition for resources
- Responses in a diverse society
  - management and impact of socio-cultural diversity
    - o assimilation
    - o integration
  - management and impact of socio-economic diversity
    - o market-based approach
    - o shared responsibility approach
    - o government-financed approach

### Issue 3: Being Part of a Globalised World

Descriptor		Key Understandings	
	<p><b>Inquiry Focus- Being part of a globalised world: Is it necessarily good?</b></p> <p><b>Why this Issue matters</b> This issue helps students understand and make meaning of their lives in a globalised world where countries, companies and individuals are interconnected and interdependent. Students will explore the impacts of globalisation in three areas: economy, culture and security. They will understand the complex process of globalisation through examining how the uneven impacts of globalisation in these areas result in trade-offs and tensions. These impacts lead to different responses from countries, companies and individuals. Students will therefore appreciate the complex decision-making process behind responses towards the impacts of globalisation. This understanding will lead them in making well-reasoned and responsible decisions as informed, concerned and participative citizens in a globalised world.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Globalisation shapes the interconnections and interdependence among countries and people.</li> <li>Globalisation creates tensions due to the uneven impacts.</li> <li>The impacts of globalisation result in differing responses from countries and people.</li> </ul>	
	<p><b>Knowledge Outcomes</b></p> <p>Students will be able to understand:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>how technology has made the world more connected;</li> <li>different responses to tensions arising from some economic impacts of globalisation;</li> <li>different responses to tensions arising from some cultural impacts of globalisation;</li> <li>different responses to tensions arising from some security impacts of globalisation.</li> </ul>		<p><b>Values Outcomes</b></p> <p>Students will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>demonstrate civic responsibility and integrity for their speech and actions in public spaces;</li> <li>empathise and care for others and the environment in which they live;</li> <li>appreciate the importance of harmony through embracing diversity;</li> <li>respect differing views when in dialogue with others;</li> <li>appreciate the importance of resilience in the face of challenges.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Skills Outcomes</b></p> <p>Students will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>examine societal issues critically;</li> <li>gather, interpret and evaluate information from different sources to make well-reasoned and substantiated conclusions on societal issues;</li> <li>demonstrate sound reasoning and responsible decision-making that is mindful of the consequences of one's actions on those around them;</li> <li>demonstrate perspective-taking when encountering differing views;</li> <li>demonstrate reflective thinking when reviewing their understanding of societal issues and examining personal assumptions and beliefs about others.</li> </ul>		<p><b>Key Concepts</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Globalisation</li> <li>Interconnections</li> <li>Interdependence</li> <li>Homogenisation</li> <li>Hybridisation</li> <li>Trade-Offs</li> <li>Security</li> </ul>

Guiding Questions	Content
<p>1. What does it mean to live in a globalised world?</p> <p>2. How do we respond to tensions arising from some economic impacts of globalisation?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Driving forces of globalisation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- developments in transportation</li> <li>- growth of Multinational Corporations (MNCs)</li> <li>- technological advancements</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Economic impact on countries, companies and individuals <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- economic growth and downturn for countries</li> <li>- higher profits/ market share and lower profits/ market share for companies</li> <li>- higher income/ greater employment opportunities and loss of incomes and employment for individuals</li> <li>- responses to economic impacts <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o cooperation and competition among countries</li> <li>o innovation and adaptation by companies</li> <li>o acquisition of knowledge and skills by individuals</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p>3. How do we respond to tensions arising from some cultural impacts of globalisation?</p> <p>4. How do we respond to tensions arising from some security impacts of globalisation?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cultural impact on countries and individuals* <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- homogenisation and hybridisation</li> <li>- different degrees of acceptance and rejection <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o entertainment</li> <li>o food</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> <li>• Security impact on countries and individuals* <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- security and vulnerability</li> <li>- management of trade-offs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o cyber security challenges</li> <li>o transnational terrorism</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>* Guiding Questions 3 and 4, their corresponding Knowledge Outcomes and content are non-examinable at the <u>GCE 'N(A)'</u>- Level Examination.</p>

### 3. RECOMMENDED PEDAGOGY: INQUIRY-BASED LEARNING

#### Translating the Humanities Inquiry Approach into the Social Studies Classroom

Social Studies is a subject that helps students to become citizens contributing towards a democratic society. This is a complicated task, as it requires teachers to develop students' knowledge, skills, and values, so as to realise the vision of students becoming informed, concerned and participative citizens.

Students need a more active and authentic experience to make sense of and investigate societal issues through the process of inquiry. These issues are interdisciplinary in nature and usually drawn from the students' experiences and society's concerns. They challenge the students' perceptions and often cannot be adequately understood or addressed effectively without a range of sources of information that illustrate the complexity of the issues. Thus, inquiry in Social Studies necessitates that the classroom is transformed into an interactive learning community where there are well-facilitated discussions showcasing multiple perspectives that accurately illustrate the complexity of various issues.

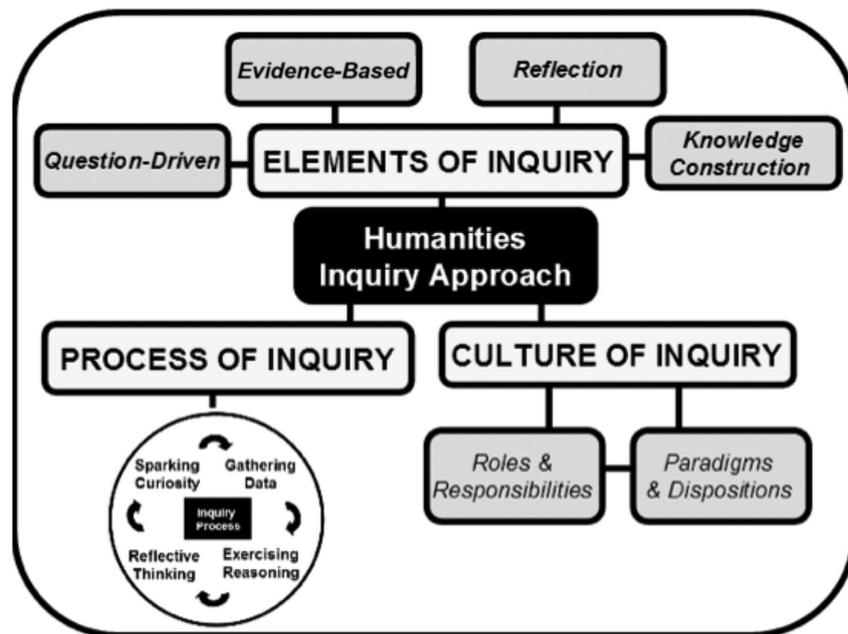


Figure 3 Framework of the Humanities Inquiry Approach

The Humanities Inquiry Approach, as shown in **Figure 3**, is underpinned by four elements of inquiry, where learning should be Question-Driven and Evidence-Based, and involves Reflection and Knowledge Construction. These elements are further exemplified through students' learning as they undergo the four stages of the inquiry process, which are Sparking Curiosity, Gathering Data, Exercising Reasoning and Reflective Thinking. Having a good understanding of these elements, the different stages of inquiry and strategies that facilitate these elements in a lesson will help teachers design meaningful inquiry lessons for Social Studies. The next section provides an overview of the four elements of inquiry, and how they are evident in the Social Studies classroom.

**(a) Learning as Question-Driven**

Inquiry-based learning seeks to spark and build on students' curiosity, so as to create meaningful learning. Questions are used to activate students' prior knowledge and challenge their assumptions, as multiple perspectives are presented for their consideration. This in turn leads to the eliciting of students' own questions out of curiosity. Thus, learning is achieved through inquiry as it is driven by teachers' and students' questions to investigate, extract, analyse and synthesise information regarding issues.

**(b) Reliance on Evidence**

The inquiry approach also requires students to justify opinions and beliefs using relevant and valid evidence. To achieve this, students must first ascertain what constitutes as 'evidence' in a discourse, which involves distinguishing between facts and opinions, and evaluating the reliability and usefulness of information. Following which, students need to draw conclusions based on the evidence they have gathered. Lastly, students should compare their evidence-based conclusions amongst one another, so as to gain deeper understanding of the issues.

**(c) Double Movement of Reflection**

With the necessary evidence gathered regarding an issue, students proceed to create a working theory, where they move from experiencing a phenomenon, to creating a working hypothesis about that experience, to experiencing the phenomenon again to test the working hypothesis, and back to revise the hypothesis, and so forth.<sup>1</sup> Developing this disposition of reflective thinking will equip students with the ability to exercise discernment over the validity of information they encounter in their daily lives.

**(d) Knowledge Construction**

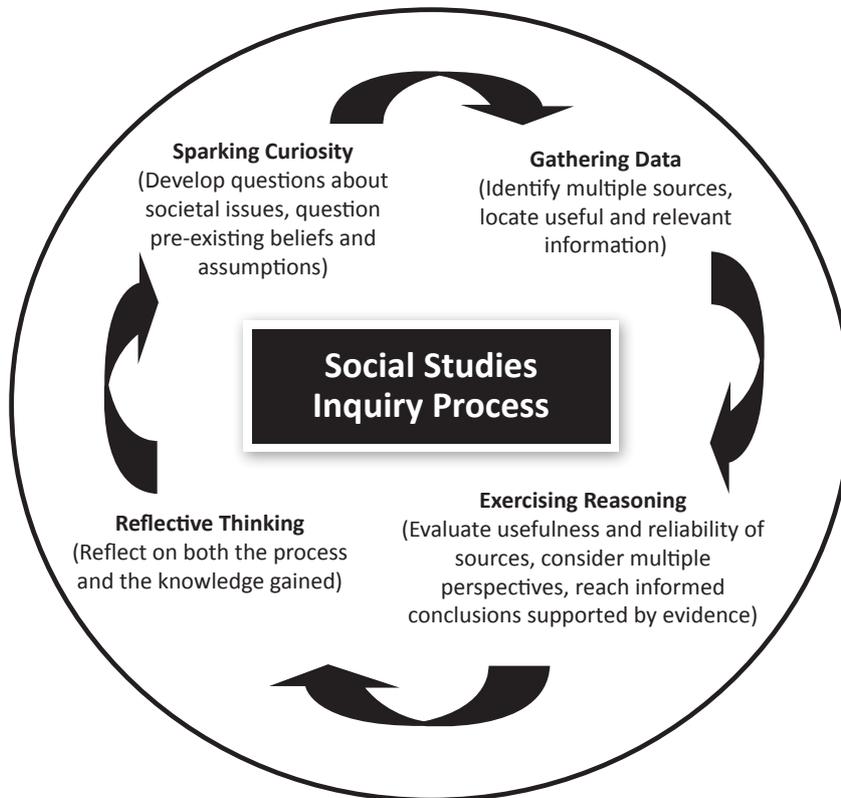
When students ask questions, gather evidence and reflect on the different perspectives presented, they are actively engaged in knowledge construction, where they discover new ways of understanding and new ways of seeing things. They do not simply receive information didactically but are engaged in meaningful learning. Thus, inquiry-based learning must involve learning opportunities which make students aware of how they see things and how they reconstruct their existing knowledge when exposed to new knowledge. Such new stimuli may provide refreshing insights for students and spark off further questions about the issue.

---

<sup>1</sup> Parker, W. C. (2003). *Teaching Democracy: Unity and Diversity in Public Life* (pp.134). New York: Teachers College Press.

## Social Studies Inquiry Process

With these four elements in mind, we proceed to examine the four stages of the inquiry process - Sparking Curiosity, Gathering Data, Exercising Reasoning and Reflective Thinking. **Figure 4** shows how a cycle of inquiry may look like in the Social Studies classroom:



**Figure 4 The Social Studies Inquiry Process**

(a) **Sparking Curiosity**

As teachers attempt to spark curiosity amongst students, teachers have to first activate their prior or pre-existing knowledge about these real-world issues, surfacing students' pre-existing beliefs and knowledge and making them aware of why they adopt such a view. It would also be useful to identify any questions they would like to address about the issue. Having achieved this, teachers can then introduce new stimulus materials that would trigger further interest and curiosity about the issue, provoking students to question their own assumptions and beliefs.

(b) **Gathering Data**

To address the gaps in their understanding, students should be encouraged to gather data from a variety of authentic sources of information within and beyond the classroom, so as to reflect a multiplicity of perspectives on the issue that they are critically examining. All these serve to enrich students' understanding about the issue.

(c) **Exercising Reasoning**

After gathering the various sources of data, students need to make sense of the data and extract relevant information. To do so, they need to describe, explain and analyse the data/information gathered and distinguish reliable from unreliable sources. As they engage in this reasoning and deliberation process where they grapple with the multiple perspectives presented, students develop new ways of understanding, arrive at informed conclusions and in turn construct new knowledge for themselves.

(d) Reflective Thinking

Reflective thinking is an integral aspect of inquiry-based learning and can take place at two levels: reflecting on the process and reflecting on the knowledge gained. Hence, reflections should not only be done at the end of projects to serve as a form of consolidation, but ought to be done at the different stages of the inquiry process.

## 4. ASSESSMENT

---

### **Purpose of Assessment**

The purpose of assessment must be understood beyond the context of high-stake national examinations. While *Assessment of Learning* does play an important role in quantifying and qualifying the students' and teachers' efforts at understanding and applying knowledge areas, it is not an end in itself. The grades and feedback received at specific junctures serve as a consolidation of students' learning, but may not be timely in helping teachers strengthen their teaching practices. Thus, *Assessment for Learning* is just as important because it provides regular feedback to teachers on how they could improve on classroom practices in order to better cater to their students' learning needs and in turn, strengthen the learning and teaching of Social Studies.

Both *Assessment of Learning* and *Assessment for Learning* have a place in the Social Studies Express/Normal (Academic) Curriculum. The modes of assessment that are highlighted in the following sub-section are designed in alignment with the purpose of the Syllabus, which is to develop our students into informed, concerned and participative citizens. This is made possible as both school-based assessment and national assessment seek to evoke students' curiosity to inquire into societal issues that concern their lives. Both assessments require students to think critically and reflectively about these issues through the appreciation of multiple perspectives, to derive at well-reasoned and substantiated conclusions.

### **Modes of Assessment**

#### *School-Based Assessment*

As mentioned previously, *Assessment for Learning* (formative assessment) is just as important as *Assessment of Learning* (summative assessment). Examples of summative assessment include class assessments and semestral examinations, while formative assessments could exist in the form of quizzes, debates, deliberative discussions and Issue Investigation. The next two sub-sections provide an overview of the place of Issue Investigation in the Social Studies classroom.

#### (a) Purpose of Issue investigation

The inquiry approach develops skills and values that cannot be wholly assessed through conventional pen-and-paper assessment modes as students are required to integrate the knowledge, skills and values learnt and demonstrate them in the classroom. Thus, the outcomes of the approach are better exemplified through their participation in learning activities.

As a performance task, Issue Investigation provides a platform for students to demonstrate the knowledge, skills and values needed for active citizenship. As students conduct investigations on societal issues of meaning to them, they extend their inquiry skills by working as a group to:

- identify a societal issue that is a cause of concern;
- gather data that reflects multiple perspectives;
- analyse the data gathered to surface trends and patterns that help address the issue;
- arrive at well-reasoned and substantiated conclusions;
- consider possible recommendations to the societal issue; and
- reflect on their understanding of the societal issue and examine personal assumptions and beliefs about the issue.

Moreover, when students undertake Issue Investigation, they learn to question unexamined assumptions and develop perspective-taking, all of which will contribute towards helping them arrive at informed conclusions. Thus, Issue Investigation provides students with the opportunity to practise and demonstrate the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Competencies to become informed, concerned and participative citizens.

(b) Assessment in Issue Investigation

The different stages of Issue Investigation, i.e. Sparking Curiosity, Gathering Data, Exercising Reasoning and Reflective Thinking, allow students the opportunity to apply a combination of knowledge, skills and values to inquire and address the societal issue they have chosen. The application of these knowledge, skills and values leads to outcomes which the Issue Investigation process aims to develop in students and they are outlined in **Figure 5**.

Humanities Inquiry Process	Skills	Issue Investigation Outcomes
<p><b>Sparkling Curiosity</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Draw on prior knowledge</li> <li>• Identify gaps in understanding and ask questions</li> <li>• Research and brainstorm on possible issues worth investigating</li> <li>• Decide on the focus of the investigation</li> <li>• Craft a manageable Issue Investigation question</li> </ul>	<p>a) * Articulate the rationale for their choice of issue for investigation</p> <p>b) * Craft a question related to the issue for investigation</p>
<p><b>Gathering Data</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify data in relation to the chosen issue e.g. stakeholders and their different perspectives, constraints and available resources</li> <li>• Locate data               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- search skills (print and online resources) e.g. using Boolean operators</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Gather data               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- research methods e.g. quantitative and/or qualitative data through questionnaires, interviews and observations</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>c) Develop a plan for data gathering (what are the sources of information, where and how to get the data)</p> <p>[Note: A teacher may decide to provide students with a selection of sources (in which case, the outcomes and qualities assessed would have to be modified).]</p>

\*May not be assessed if students require more help from teachers.

Humanities Inquiry Process	Skills	Issue Investigation Outcomes
<p><b>Exercising Reasoning</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evaluate sources of information <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- comprehend and extract relevant information</li> <li>- draw inferences from given information</li> <li>- analyse and evaluate evidence</li> <li>- compare and contrast different views</li> <li>- distinguish between fact, opinion and judgement</li> <li>- recognise values and detect bias</li> <li>- draw conclusion(s) based on reasoned consideration of evidence and arguments, taking into consideration different perspectives</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Demonstrate sound reasoning and responsible decision-making that is mindful of the consequences of their actions on those around them</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>d) Analyse and evaluate the data gathered (trends, problems, constraints, resources, perspectives)</li> <li>e) Arrive at well-reasoned and substantiated conclusion(s)</li> <li>f) Propose recommendations to ameliorate the concern</li> </ul>
<p><b>Reflective Thinking</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reflect on the process of Issue Investigation</li> <li>• Reflect on the personal assumptions and beliefs that may have influenced their understanding of societal issues</li> <li>• Reflect on any new understanding that was gained in the process of Issue Investigation</li> <li>• Reflect on the possibility of further actions/ recommendations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>g) Communicate proposal to classmates</li> <li>h) Reflect on the process of investigation, feedback given and new understanding of the issue</li> </ul> <p><b><u>Extension</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i) Carry out the proposed action</li> <li>j) Gather feedback on the action taken</li> <li>k) Evaluate the action taken</li> </ul>

**Figure 5 Issue Investigation in Social Studies**

As a school-based assessment, the components to be assessed through Issue Investigation are not fixed. Teachers have the flexibility to assess components they feel are within their students' ability. Another criterion that can be used to decide on the Issue Investigation components to be assessed would be the purpose of the activity and what teachers hope students would achieve at the end of Issue Investigation.

Below are some assessment guidelines on Issue Investigation:

- To be included as a component of Secondary Three or Four Continual Assessment (CA).
- The percentage of CA marks set aside for Issue Investigation will be determined by the school. This percentage should reflect the importance of the task.
- One Issue Investigation to be completed in either Secondary Three or Four.

### National Assessment

Assessment of Learning, to establish and find evidence of the quality of students' learning, is done through both school-based and national-assessment. As in school-based assessment, national assessment is designed in alignment with the Social Studies Express/Normal (Academic) Syllabus. Through the Syllabus, students will acquire the relevant knowledge and understanding about societal issues, develop critical and reflective thinking skills, and appreciate multiple perspectives. In alignment with these aims, the assessment objectives of the 'O'- and 'N(A)'- Level assessments emphasise inquiry, reflective and critical thinking, and understanding of multiple perspectives. The assessments are, in addition, appropriately scoped in terms of the content and skills tested at 'O'- and 'N(A)'- Level. While the 'O'- Level examination is based on three Issues, the 'N(A)'- Level examination is based on two and a half Issues. **Figure 6** shows the assessment objectives for the Syllabus.

#### **The assessment objectives are:**

##### **Objective 1 – Knowledge with Understanding**

Candidates should be able to

- demonstrate an understanding of societal issues

##### **Objective 2 – Interpreting and Evaluating Sources/Given Information**

Candidates should be able to

- comprehend and extract relevant information
- draw inferences from given information
- analyse and evaluate evidence
- compare and contrast different views
- distinguish between fact, opinion and judgement
- recognise values and detect bias
- draw conclusions based on reasoned consideration of evidence and arguments

##### **Objective 3 – Constructing Explanations**

Candidates should be able to

- analyse societal issues through different perspectives
- construct reasoned arguments and make informed judgement and recommendations

**Figure 6 Assessment Objectives for the Syllabus**

## Scheme of Assessment

The assessment objectives reflect the emphasis in the aims of the Social Studies Syllabus. These objectives are tested in two different sections of the Social Studies paper.

### Section A: Source-Based Case Study (SBCS)

The GCE 'O'- and 'N(A)'- Level Social Studies Syllabus aims to develop critical and reflective thinking, and perspective-taking in students. This is best assessed in Section A where students are required to demonstrate their knowledge, skills and conceptual understanding through an unseen SBCS. They will interpret and evaluate a collection of sources based on a societal issue. There is hence, alignment between Assessment Objectives 1 and 2 with the assessment items in this section.

A new assessment item, sub-question (e) is introduced, where students are required to consolidate perspectives from multiple sources of information to respond to the issue of the Source-Base Case Study.

### Section B: Structured-Response Question (SRQ)

The GCE 'O'- and 'N(A)'- Level Social Studies Syllabus is anchored on issues and driven by inquiry, where knowledge is important as a basis for discourse on societal issues. Students will be required to show their understanding of societal issues when they apply their knowledge as they analyse societal issues and construct explanations. This emphasis on knowledge beyond factual recall and the ability to construct reasoned arguments and make informed judgement and recommendations are tested in Section B. These fulfil Assessment Objectives 1 and 3.

### Duration and Weighting

The total duration for both the 'O'- and 'N(A)'- Level Social Studies papers is 1hr 45mins. As seen previously, the 'O'- and 'N(A)'- Level Social Studies papers comprise two sections: Section A (Source-Based Case Study) and Section B (Structured-Response Question). Students will have to attempt all questions in both Section A and Section B. The total marks for SBCS is 35 marks for both the 'O'- and 'N(A)'- Level examinations. Correspondingly, the total marks for SRQ is 15 marks. Both the SBCS and SRQ will be marked using the Levels of Response Marking Scheme (LORMS), which rewards the level of skill or understanding displayed in an answer.

The weighting for the assessment objectives can be found in **Figure 7**. As can be seen, Objectives 1 and 2 are of a greater weightage than Objectives 1 and 3. This means that Section A will involve a greater number of marks and students will need to spend a longer period of time to complete this section.

Assessment Objective	Weighting
Objective 1 + Objective 2	35%
Objective 1 + Objective 3	15%
Total	50%

**Figure 7 GCE 'O'- and 'N(A)'- Level Assessment Specification Grid**