



1 The paper at a glance

From 2027, Social Studies has no stand-alone SEC code. It is Paper 1 of every Combined Humanities subject: K335 to K340 at G3 and K229 to K231 at G2. The elective, which is Geography, History or a Literature paper, is the other half of the grade. Source: SEAB 2027 SEC syllabuses.

Paper 1 Social Studies (SEAB 2027 syllabuses)

Part	What SEAB sets	Marks
Whole paper	One paper of 1 h 45 min, worth 50% of the Combined Humanities grade. Both sections are compulsory.	50
Section A, Questions 1 to 4	A source-based case study. Each question tests source-handling skills on specific sources.	25 in total
Section A, Question 5	Source-handling skills using several sources. At G3 the question asks you to consider the issue of the case study from a different perspective.	10
Section B, Question 6	A structured-response question. A reasoned explanation or recommendation set in the context of Singapore, with more than one cause or strategy at G3.	7
Section B, Question 7	A structured-response question. Explain two factors or perspectives, then judge their relative importance or give a balanced conclusion.	8

- SEAB fixes only the 25-mark total for Questions 1 to 4, so schools split those marks in different ways.
- The case study can be set on any of the three Issues, and its topic may not be covered in the syllabus content. The structured-response questions are never set on the same Issue as the case study.
- Both sections are marked with a Levels of Response Marking Scheme. The syllabus does not publish the Social Studies level descriptors.

The three Issues

Issue	Inquiry focus	Content to revise
1. Exploring Citizenship and Governance	Working for the good of society: whose responsibility is it?	Differing needs and interests, differing priorities, unequal sharing of costs, managing trade-offs, principles of governance
2. Living in a Diverse Society	Living in a diverse society: is harmony achievable?	Race and ethnicity, religion, socio-economic status, nationality, responses to diversity
3. Being Part of a Globalised World	Being part of a globalised world: how can we respond to globalisation?	Economic, cultural and security impacts at G3 (economic impacts only at G2), and responses such as government support and individuals gaining knowledge and skills

How G2 differs from G3

Point	G3 (K335 to K340)	G2 (K229 to K231)
Length, sections and marks	1 h 45 min, 50 marks, Section A 35 and Section B 15	The same
Answer format	Written on paper	Hard-copy question paper, answers typed into a digital answer booklet
Question 5	Considers the issue of the case study from a different perspective	Relates directly to the issue of the case study
Question 6	More than one cause or strategy	A single cause or strategy
Question 7	Two factors or perspectives, plus a judgement or balanced conclusion	Explain two factors or perspectives
Issue 3 content	Economic, cultural and security impacts	Economic impacts only

- The G2 combinations are K229 (Social Studies, Geography), K230 (Social Studies, History) and K231 (Social Studies, Literature in English).

A suggested time plan (SEAB sets only the total)

Stage	Suggested time	What to do
Read	about 5 min	Read all the questions first, then the background and every provenance line. Mark each source as for or against the Question 5 statement.
Questions 1 to 4	about 45 min	Spend time in proportion to the marks shown on the paper.
Question 5	about 20 min	Plan the support and challenge groups before writing.
Questions 6 and 7	about 30 min	Give Question 7 slightly longer, as it carries the judgement.
Final check	about 5 min	Run the checklist in Section 4 of this guide.

- This plan is a suggestion, not an SEAB rule. Adjust it after timed practice.

2 Answer frames for source questions

SEAB does not name question types. Its syllabus lists source skills, such as drawing inferences, comparing views, recognising values and detecting bias, and evaluating evidence. The question types below are the ones schools commonly practise. Each frame gives sentence starters in order, with what a high-level answer does at each step. The ladder under each table is common school practice, not an SEAB level descriptor.

Inference: "What can you infer from Source A about ...?"

Step	Sentence starters	What a high-level answer does
Give the inference	Source A suggests that ... / I can infer that the writer believes ...	States something the source implies but does not say outright, and answers the exact question asked
Prove it	This is shown when the source says '...', which hints that ...	Uses a short detail from the source and explains how it leads to the inference
Add a second inference	A further inference is that ..., as seen in ...	Gives a second, different inference with its own proof when the marks allow
Tie it to the question	Taken together, this shows that the writer ...	Links back to what the question asks about, such as the writer's attitude, not a summary of the source

- Common school ladder: the lowest level copies or summarises the source. A middle level makes one inference with proof. The top level makes two supported inferences, or one about the source's overall message.

Purpose: "Why was Source B published?"

Step	Sentence starters	What a high-level answer does
Set the context	Source B was published in ..., when ...	Places the source in its time and situation using the provenance line and background
Give the message	Through this source, the author wants readers to see that ...	States the message the author wants to get across, proved with a detail
Name the audience and outcome	The author wanted [audience] to [think, feel or do] ...	Names a specific audience and a specific reaction or action, which is the heart of a purpose answer
Explain the author's interest	This is because the author, as a ..., would gain if ...	Explains why this particular author would want that outcome

- Common school ladder: the lowest level describes the source. A middle level gives only the message. Higher levels give the intended outcome for a named audience, supported by the message, the context and the author's interest.

Comparison: "How similar are Sources A and B?"

Step	Sentence starters	What a high-level answer does
Pick a shared point	On the question of ..., Source A argues ... while Source B argues ...	Compares what the sources say or believe on one point, not who wrote them or their topic
Give a similarity	Both sources ... Source A shows this when ... Source B shows this when ...	Backs the similarity with evidence from both sources
Give a difference	However, they differ on ... Source A ..., whereas Source B ...	Backs the difference with evidence from both sources, on a matched point
Compare the overall view	Overall, Source A supports ..., while Source B opposes ...	Compares the main message or attitude of each source, often the strongest comparison
Give a verdict	So the sources are mostly different, because ...	Answers 'how similar' or 'how different' with a reason

- Common school ladder: the lowest level compares provenance or topic. A middle level gives one matched similarity or difference on content. The top level gives a similarity and a difference, or compares overall messages, with a verdict.

Reliability: "How reliable is Source C?" or "Are you surprised by Source C?"

Step	Sentence starters	What a high-level answer does
Cross-check the content	Source C's claim that ... is supported by Source ..., which states ... / is challenged by ...	Tests a specific claim against another source or the background, not general knowledge alone
Examine the provenance	As a [who] writing [when] for [audience], the author would want to ...	Uses who made the source, when and why to judge whether it could be one-sided
Spot what is left out or loaded	The author does not mention ..., which suggests ... / The words '...' exaggerate ...	Points to loaded language, missing facts or selective figures
Judge	Therefore Source C is not reliable about ..., because ...	Gives a clear verdict on the specific claim, with a reason
Surprise variant	I am not surprised by Source C, because its claim that ... is confirmed by ..., and as a ..., the author would be expected to ...	Treats 'surprised' as an evaluation question. It checks the content and the author's purpose before deciding.

- 'Surprise question' is a school term, not an SEAB one. Common school ladder: the lowest level accepts or rejects the source without checking. A middle level makes one check, of content or of provenance. The top level makes both checks and reaches a clear verdict.

Usefulness: "How useful is Source D as evidence about ...?"

Step	Sentence starters	What a high-level answer does
Say what it shows	Source D is useful because it tells us that ...	Names the specific information the source gives about the topic in the question
Test whether it can be trusted	This is only useful if accurate. Source ... confirms that ... / contradicts ...	Recognises that a source is only useful if its content can be trusted, then checks it
Note its limits	It is less useful because it does not show ... / It gives only the view of ...	Points to what the source cannot tell us, such as other groups' views
Use its bias	Even if one-sided, it is useful as evidence of how ... felt about ...	Sees that a biased source can still be useful evidence of its author's view
Judge	Overall, Source D is useful as evidence of ..., but limited because ...	Gives a verdict that weighs what the source shows against how far it can be trusted

- Common school ladder: the lowest level says useful or not useful from what the source contains. A middle level checks the content or the provenance. The top level checks both and judges usefulness for the exact purpose in the question.

Question 5, the hypothesis question: "[Statement]. How far do the sources support this view?"

Step	Sentence starters	What a high-level answer does
Plan	The statement claims that ...	Underlines the key words of the statement and sorts every source into support or challenge before writing
Support	Source A supports the view. It states ..., which shows ...	Explains how each supporting source backs the specific claim, with a detail from each
Challenge	However, Source B does not support the view, because ...	Argues the other side the same way, so the answer is not one-sided
Weigh the sources	Source A's support is weaker, because the author ... / is confirmed by ...	Tests at least one source for reliability, so sources are weighed and not just counted
Conclude	Overall, the sources support the view only to a limited extent, because ...	Ends with a 'how far' judgement that follows from the weighing

- Common school ladder: the lowest level answers from one side only or without sources. A middle level uses sources on both sides. The top level uses sources on both sides and evaluates at least one source to reach a 'how far' judgement. At G3 the question looks at the issue from a different perspective, and at G2 it relates directly to the case study issue.

3 Structured-response frames

Section B has two questions on a different Issue from the case study, both set in the context of Singapore. Many schools teach PEEL (point, explanation, evidence, link) to keep each paragraph complete. It is a writing technique, not an SEAB requirement.

Question 6 (7 marks): explain a factor or recommend a strategy

Part	Sentence starters	What a high-level answer does
Point	One reason why ... is ... / One way Singapore can ... is ...	Names a clear factor or strategy that answers the question
Explanation	This is because ... As a result, ...	Shows the chain of cause and effect step by step
Evidence	For example, in Singapore, ...	Gives a specific Singapore example, such as a policy, scheme or event
Link	Therefore, ... helps to ...	Ties the paragraph back to the exact words of the question
Second factor or strategy	Another reason is that ...	At G3, explains a second cause or strategy as fully as the first. At G2, Question 6 asks for a single cause or strategy, so one fully developed explanation is the aim.

Question 7 (8 marks): two factors and a judgement

Part	Sentence starters	What a high-level answer does
Factor 1	[Factor 1] matters because ... For example, ...	Point, explanation, Singapore evidence and link, as in Question 6
Factor 2	On the other hand, [factor 2] also ...	Explains the second factor as fully as the first, not as a one-line afterthought
Judgement	I think [factor] matters more, because ...	Gives a reason for the judgement using a clear criterion, such as those in the next table
Or a balanced conclusion	Both ... and ... are needed, because without ..., ...	Explains how the two factors depend on each other instead of saying they are equally important

- At G2, Question 7 asks you to explain two factors or perspectives, without the G3 requirement to judge between them.

Ways to reach a judgement

Criterion	Sentence starter	Use it when
Who it affects	[Factor] matters more, because it affects ... while ... affects only ...	One factor reaches far more people or groups
How long it lasts	[Factor] has a longer-lasting effect, because ...	One factor gives a quick fix and the other a lasting change
Which depends on which	[Factor] matters more, because ... only works if ...	One factor cannot succeed without the other
Root cause	[Factor] is the deeper cause, because it explains why ...	One factor lies behind the other

4 Pre-submission checklist

Use the last few minutes to run through these checks. Each one targets a way marks are commonly lost.

Before you hand in

Check	Ask yourself	Where it matters
Answered the question type	Did I infer, compare or judge as asked, or did I describe the source?	Questions 1 to 5
Every claim has proof	Is each point backed by a detail from the source?	Questions 1 to 5
Named the right source	Did I use the source the question names, and only that one where asked?	Questions 1 to 4
Compared content, not provenance	Do my comparisons match on the same point and give a verdict?	Comparison questions
Checked before judging	Did I cross-check the content and consider who wrote it and why?	Reliability, surprise and usefulness
Used sources on both sides	Did I group sources for and against and evaluate at least one?	Question 5
Gave a clear verdict	Does each evaluation and Question 5 end with a direct answer?	Questions 1 to 5
Singapore examples	Does each Section B paragraph have a specific Singapore example?	Questions 6 and 7
Judgement with a reason	Did I say which factor matters more, and why?	Question 7 at G3
Nothing left blank	Have I written something for every question, even a short answer?	Whole paper

- G2 candidates type their answers, so also check that every answer is in the right box of the digital answer booklet.

5 Common mistakes and the fix

These are habits that keep answers at the lower levels, with a fix for each.

Mistakes and fixes

Mistake	Why it costs marks	The fix
Copying the source as an inference	An inference is what the source suggests, not what it says	Start with 'This suggests that ...' and then quote the line that proves it
Comparing who wrote the sources	Different authors is not a different view	Compare what each source says or believes on the same point
Comparing topics instead of views	Saying both sources are about the same issue earns almost nothing	Find where the sources agree or disagree about that issue
Calling a source biased with no proof	Bias must be shown, not assumed	Point to the author's interest, loaded words or what is left out
Using only general knowledge to judge	Source answers are rewarded for using the sources	Cross-check with another source or the background before adding outside knowledge
Saying 'useful' only because it has information	Useful evidence must also be trustworthy	Test the content and the provenance, then judge for the purpose in the question
Answering Question 5 from one side	The question asks 'how far', which needs both sides	Write a support paragraph, a challenge paragraph, then a weighed conclusion
Listing factors without explaining them	Named factors without a cause-and-effect chain stay at the lower levels	Explain how each factor leads to the outcome, then add a Singapore example
Ending with 'both are equally important'	A judgement with no reason does not show evaluation	Pick a criterion, such as who it affects or how long it lasts, and argue from it
Running out of time on Section B	Fifteen marks are left for the last part of the paper	Follow a time plan and move on when a question's time is up