



Higher
Coursework
Assessment Task



Higher Modern Studies

Assignment

Assessment task

This document provides information for teachers and lecturers about the coursework component of this course in terms of the skills, knowledge and understanding that are assessed. It **must** be read in conjunction with the course specification.

Valid from session 2024-25 and until further notice.

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Introduction

This document contains instructions for teachers and lecturers, marking instructions, and instructions for candidates for the Higher Modern Studies assignment. You must read it in conjunction with the course specification.

This assignment is worth 30 marks. This is 27% of the overall marks for the course assessment.

This is one of three course assessment components. The other components are question papers.

Instructions for teachers and lecturers

Specified resources to be taken into assessment

During the production of evidence stage, candidates should only have access to their Modern Studies research sheet. The research sheet must be submitted to SQA with the evidence produced during the production of evidence stage. This research sheet must consist of no more than two single sides of A4 paper.

The Modern Studies research sheet should show evidence of primary or secondary research carried out by the candidate. It may include, for example:

- ◆ statistical, graphical or numerical data
- ◆ survey results
- ◆ interview questions and/or answers
- ◆ questionnaires and/or results
- ◆ newspaper articles or extracts
- ◆ notes taken from a visit, talk, or a written or audio-visual source

The purpose of the research sheet is to help candidates use their evidence and references, collected during the research stage, to address their chosen topic or issue. The research sheet should not take the form of a 'plan' as this is likely to encourage direct copying, which gains no marks.

Marking instructions

In line with SQA's normal practice, the following marking instructions for the Higher Modern Studies assignment are addressed to the marker. They are also helpful for those preparing candidates for course assessment.

Candidates' evidence is submitted to SQA for external marking.

General marking principles

Always apply these general principles. Use them in conjunction with the detailed marking instructions, which identify the key features required in candidates' responses.

- a Always use positive marking. This means candidates accumulate marks for the demonstration of relevant skills, knowledge and understanding; marks are not deducted for errors or omissions.
- b If a candidate response does not seem to be covered by either the principles or detailed marking instructions, and you are uncertain how to assess it, you must seek guidance from your team leader.
- c Do not award marks for any information which is simply copied from the Modern Studies research sheet, and not used to demonstrate skills, knowledge and understanding. Do not mark the research sheet. However, it may help to clarify points which the candidate has made in their report, and may allow you to gain an insight into what they intended.
- d In order to access all the available marks, candidates must refer to the research evidence included in their research sheet to support their skills, knowledge and understanding.

Detailed marking instructions

Task	Marking instructions	Max mark	Additional guidance
A	<p>Identifying and demonstrating knowledge and understanding of the issue about which a decision has to be made, including alternative courses of action</p>	10	<p>Candidates can gain marks in a number of ways up to a maximum of 10 marks.</p> <p>Candidates must use their own knowledge and understanding to support their analysis, evaluation and decision.</p> <p>Award knowledge and understanding marks where points are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ relevant to the issue candidates have chosen ◆ developed (by providing additional detail, exemplification, reasons or evidence) ◆ used to respond to the demands of the task <p>Award marks where candidates have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ identified an appropriate issue about which there are alternative views and a decision may be made ◆ explained the background to the issue ◆ explained the issue with depth and clarity ◆ explained at least two alternative decisions and/or courses of action arising from the issue <p>Alternative decisions or courses of action may be in the form of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ do something/do not do something ◆ do something/do something else ◆ make a decision from a range of alternative decisions

Task	Marking instructions	Max mark	Additional guidance
			<p>Candidates may demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of the issue and the decisions and/or courses of action arising from the issue in a single section of their report; however they are more likely to demonstrate knowledge and understanding both in an introductory section and in support of their analysis, throughout their report. Award marks for relevant knowledge and understanding wherever it appears in the report.</p>
B	<p>Analysing and synthesising information from a range of sources including use of specified resources</p>	10	<p>Candidates can gain marks in a number of ways up to a maximum of 10 marks.</p> <p>Award marks depending on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ level of detail ◆ quality of analysis ◆ extent of synthesis of information ◆ consideration of a range of alternative views ◆ references to research evidence <p>Analysis involves identifying parts, the relationship between them, and their relationships with the whole. It can also involve drawing out and relating implications.</p> <p>Synthesis involves the linking of knowledge and/or information from within or between sources, including information from their research evidence.</p> <p>Analysis involves consideration of the implications of the decision in terms of various aspects and/or factors, for example, political, social, economic, legal or international. Candidates move beyond description and explanation of relevant detail.</p>

Task	Marking instructions	Max mark	Additional guidance
			<p>Award analysis marks where candidates use their knowledge and understanding and/or a source to identify relevant components (for example, of an idea, theory or argument) and clearly show at least one of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ links between different components ◆ links between component(s) and the whole ◆ links between component(s) and related concepts ◆ similarities and contradictions ◆ consistency and inconsistency ◆ different views and/or interpretations ◆ possible consequences and/or implications ◆ the relative importance of components ◆ understanding of underlying order or structure <p>Award up to a maximum of 5 marks if candidates make no reference to their research evidence. Candidates may refer to research evidence throughout the report and should gain marks wherever it appears.</p>

Task	Marking instructions	Max mark	Additional guidance
C	Evaluating the usefulness and reliability of a range of sources of information	2	<p>Candidates can gain marks in a number of ways up to a maximum of 2 marks.</p> <p>Award marks depending on the quality of evaluation of the usefulness and/or reliability of the sources used, referring to, for example, the nature of the source, quality of data, objectivity of the source, research methodology:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ The evidence in source X has been gathered by a respected research organisation which is politically neutral and therefore is less likely to be biased than other evidence. ◆ The evidence is useful as it has used a large sample, asking the same question over a number of years. ◆ The body collecting the information in source Y is allied with political party Z, therefore is likely to be biased and therefore not completely reliable. ◆ The information is useful as it has been gathered recently so gives an accurate view of the position at the moment. <p>Award marks where candidates incorporate their evaluation of the usefulness and reliability of the sources of information into their analysis of the issue.</p>
D	Communicating information using the conventions of a report	4	<p>Candidates can gain marks in a number of ways up to a maximum of 4 marks.</p> <p>Award marks for the communication of information based on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ structure, including the use of headings and sections where appropriate to organise information ◆ report style, including the use of appropriate social science terminology ◆ referring to evidence used, including research evidence and background knowledge of issue ◆ consistency, coherence and logic of argument

Task	Marking instructions	Max mark	Additional guidance
E	Reaching a decision, supported by evidence, about the issue	4	<p>Candidates can gain marks in a number of ways up to a maximum of 4 marks.</p> <p>Award marks where candidates make a relative judgement about the importance of different factors on the decision made, supported by an explanation based on evidence of the basis on which their judgement was made.</p> <p>Award marks based on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ clarity of decision reached and quality of evidence used to support decision ◆ explanation for rejection of alternative decisions or courses of action

Note: the overview of marking instructions grid provides further clarification on the allocation of marks.

Overview of marking instructions

Skills	0 marks	1 mark	2 marks	3 marks	4 marks	5 marks
<p>Identifying and demonstrating knowledge and understanding of the issue about which a decision has to be made, including alternative courses of action</p> <p>Award up to a maximum of 10 marks.</p> <p>Award up to 5 marks for background and framing of issue and alternatives.</p> <p>Award a further 5 marks for knowledge and understanding which supports the analysis of the issue.</p>	<p>No appropriate issue identified.</p> <p>No explanation of issue, background or significance of issue.</p>	<p>Issue identified and background to issue explained.</p>	<p>Significance/ impact of issue explained in terms of at least one aspect and/or factor, for example, political, social, economic, legal or international.</p>	<p>Significance/ impact of issue explained in terms of more than one aspect and/or factor, for example, political, social, economic, legal or international.</p>	<p>Alternative decisions framed in terms of taking a specific course of action against one or more alternative courses of action.</p>	<p>Detailed explanation of the alternative courses of action which could be pursued.</p>
	<p>No knowledge or understanding used in support of analysis.</p>	<p>Knowledge and understanding of the issue is used to support the analysis.</p> <p>Award up to 5 marks depending on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ quality of the background information ◆ level of detail given ◆ range of information used to support different aspects of the analysis ◆ synthesis of background information with research evidence 				

Skills	0 marks	1 mark	2 marks	3 marks	4 marks	5 marks
<p>Analysing and synthesising information from a range of sources including use of specified resources</p> <p>Award up to a maximum of 10 marks.</p> <p>Award a maximum of 5 marks if no reference is made to research evidence.</p>	Implications of the issue are not considered.	The implications of a decision or course of action are considered in terms of one aspect, for example, political, social, economic, legal or international.	A single course of action is considered in terms of two aspects, for example, political, social, economic, legal or international. Or The implications of two possible decisions or courses of action are considered in terms of one aspect.	A single course of action is considered in terms of more than two aspects, for example, political, social, economic, legal or international. Or The implications of several possible decisions or courses of action are considered in terms of one aspect.	At least two possible decisions or courses of action are considered in terms of at least two aspects of the issue.	Several possible decisions or courses of action are considered in terms of multiple aspects of the issue.
	No reference made to research evidence.	One relevant reference made to research evidence.	Two relevant references made to research evidence.	Three relevant references made to research evidence.	Evidence from research linked to support analysis.	Detailed evidence from research evidence synthesised to support analysis.

Skills	0 marks	1 mark	2 marks	3 marks	4 marks	5 marks
Evaluating the usefulness and reliability of a range of sources of information Award up to 2 marks.	No evaluation of usefulness or reliability of sources of information used.	Clear evaluation of at least one source of evidence used in making the decision or generalised statement of usefulness or reliability of evidence used.	Clear evaluation making a comparative judgement of at least two sources of evidence used in making the decision.			
Communicating information using the conventions of a report Award up to 4 marks.	No report format used or coherent structure.	Award up to 4 marks based on the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ structure, including the use of headings and sections where appropriate to organise information ◆ report style, including the use of appropriate social science terminology ◆ referring to evidence used, including research evidence and background knowledge of issue ◆ consistency, coherence and logic of argument 				
Reaching a decision, supported by evidence, about the issue Award up to 4 marks.	No evidence presented to support decision.	Decision made supported by evidence.	Decision made supported by detailed evidence.	Decision made supported by evidence as to why decision is preferred to alternative(s).	Decision made supported by detailed evidence and evaluation as to why decision is preferred to alternative(s).	

Instructions for candidates

This assessment applies to the assignment for Higher Modern Studies.

This assignment is worth 30 marks. This is 27% of the overall marks for the course assessment.

It assesses the following skills, knowledge and understanding:

- ◆ identifying a modern studies issue about which there are alternative views
- ◆ researching a modern studies issue, using a range of sources of information
- ◆ analysing and synthesising information from a range of sources
- ◆ evaluating the usefulness and reliability of a range of sources of information
- ◆ reaching a decision on the issue studied
- ◆ showing detailed knowledge and understanding of the issue to support the decision reached
- ◆ showing an awareness of alternatives to the decision
- ◆ communicating information using the conventions of a report

When doing your research and when producing your evidence, you can demonstrate these skills in any way that you think makes sense for the issue you have chosen. You do not need to demonstrate them in any set order.

The assignment has two stages:

- ◆ research
- ◆ production of evidence: writing a report of your findings (under supervision, within 1 hour and 30 minutes, and in one sitting)

Your teacher or lecturer will let you know if there are any specific conditions for doing this assessment.

In the research stage you should choose a topic or issue which allows you to analyse a contemporary modern studies issue about which there are alternative views. This may be related to areas you have studied in class, or you may choose to research any relevant topic or issue.

In the research stage you complete the Modern Studies research sheet to help you during the next stage – writing a report of your findings. Your research sheet must consist of no more than two single sides of A4 paper.

In the production of evidence stage you complete your report. You will have the Modern Studies research sheet with you when you write your report under controlled conditions.

You will not gain any marks for information which is simply copied from your Modern Studies research sheet and not used to demonstrate your skills, knowledge and understanding.

Your research sheet must be submitted with your report to SQA. The research sheet is not marked.

Examples of what you may include on your research sheet:

- ◆ evidence and/or data from primary or secondary research
- ◆ statistical, graphical or numerical data
- ◆ survey results
- ◆ interview questions and/or answers
- ◆ questionnaires and/or results
- ◆ newspaper articles or extracts
- ◆ notes taken from a visit, talk, or a written or audio-visual source

Working with others

While you should choose your own topic to research, others in your class may have chosen a similar topic. You might want to work with others for part of the time, when you are collecting information.

If you choose to do this, it is important that you are able to show what you have contributed to this part of your assignment, and that the research sheet is your own work.

In this assessment you will:	How you can do this
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ identify a modern studies issue about which there are alternative views 	<p>You should choose a modern studies issue that allows you to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ carry out research on a contemporary issue ◆ show your knowledge and understanding of the issue ◆ use your modern studies skills to analyse the issue ◆ make a decision about the issue ◆ show your awareness of alternative decisions or courses of action <p>You can choose any modern studies issue and can research further something you have studied in class, or an issue you are interested in finding out more about. Your issue may be a political or social issue; Scottish, UK or international.</p> <p>The issue you choose must be one on which there are a range of views which you can consider and reach a decision. For example, you could make a decision about whether or not the United Nations should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ send in a peacekeeping force to a troubled area or not send in a peacekeeping force Or ◆ send in a peacekeeping force or impose sanctions Or ◆ send in a peacekeeping force, impose sanctions or authorise military intervention <p>You must have a clear idea of the background to the issue you are going to research, in order to focus your research. This can include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ a clear description of the issue ◆ an understanding of the different views on the issue ◆ why this is an important issue ◆ questions or aims which help you to focus your research by finding answers <p>Your teacher or lecturer may support you by commenting on the suitability of the issue you have chosen and providing advice on the likely availability of resources.</p>

In this assessment you will:	How you can do this
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ research a modern studies issue, using a range of sources of information 	<p>You should collect information from a range of different sources using a range of different research methods. Your research methods can include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ primary research where the evidence you collect is original to you ◆ secondary research where the information you use has been produced by someone else <p>You should keep notes on the sources of the information you use and how useful and reliable they were.</p> <p>The sorts of methods you can use include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ carrying out interviews ◆ conducting surveys or questionnaires ◆ sending letters or emails ◆ reading official reports or research from think-tanks or pressure groups ◆ internet website searches ◆ searching libraries for newspapers, magazines and books (print or electronic) ◆ going on visits or field trips ◆ taking notes on television programmes, videos, DVDs, digital streaming radio and podcasts

In this assessment you will:	How you can do this
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ analyse and synthesise information from a range of sources 	<p>You will collect a wide range of evidence and data on your issue. You can use this information by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ selecting the most important information to address the issue you are researching ◆ deciding which is the most useful and reliable information ◆ combining information from different sources to make a stronger argument ◆ linking information together which shows different views about the issue, or an aspect of the issue ◆ establishing similarities and contradictions between different views or aspects of the issue ◆ showing where evidence or views are consistent or inconsistent ◆ contrasting the possible consequences or implications of decisions ◆ weighing up the different arguments on the issue ◆ considering the strengths and weaknesses of the different decisions which could be made, or courses of action which could be taken <p>You may, for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Establish links between components, for example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> —This factor is linked to that factor; evidence X and evidence Y both support the factor. ◆ Establish contradictions or inconsistencies, for example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> —While there were political reasons for this policy, it had negative social and/or economic consequences. ◆ Explore different views and interpretations, for example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> —Political party A says this, while political party B says this; evidence from D disagrees with evidence from E. ◆ Establish possible consequences and/or implications, for example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> —If policy X is introduced, Y is likely to occur; doing Z may result in ... <p>After considering the information and different views, you should be in a position to make a decision on the issue. You may end up making a decision or recommending a course of action different from the one you thought you might make. It is important that your decision or the course of action you recommend is based on the evidence and shows you considered alternative views and evidence.</p>

In this assessment you will:	How you can do this
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ evaluate the usefulness and reliability of a range of sources of information 	<p>You must provide a clear evaluation, making a judgement about the usefulness and reliability of at least two sources of evidence used in making your decision.</p> <p>Examples of factors that affect how useful and reliable sources of information you have used are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ how up-to-date the information is ◆ the size of the sample in a survey ◆ whether the source of the information is likely to be biased ◆ whether the data was collected over a period of time or as a 'one-off' ◆ the extent of the expertise of the person being interviewed or writing an article <p>Some information will be more useful than others, for example, official data, or a survey which gathered a large sample of the public's opinions on an issue over a period of time, may be more reliable than the views gathered from one member of a particular political party from an interview.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ reach a decision on the issue studied 	<p>Your decision may be in the form of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ deciding to do something or to not do something ◆ recommending a particular decision or course of action rather than one or more alternatives ◆ suggesting that a particular policy should be carried out <p>Any decision you make must be based on your evidence and must show you have considered other options as well as your decision.</p> <p>You need to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ support your decision with detailed evidence ◆ say why you prefer your decision over alternatives ◆ evaluate the strengths or weaknesses or consequences of your decision compared to other possible decisions <p>Any decision you make which is not supported by evidence and which ignores other viewpoints will not gain any marks.</p>

In this assessment you will:	How you can do this
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ show detailed knowledge and understanding of the issue to support the decision reached 	<p>In your assignment report you must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ describe the background to the issue ◆ explain the impact or significance of the issue, for example, political, social, economic, legal or international ◆ explain the causes, consequences or implications of the issue, for example, political, social, economic, legal or international ◆ explain different viewpoints on the issue ◆ explain the different decisions which could be made or courses of action which could be taken
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ communicate information using the conventions of a report 	<p>Your report should include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ a title ◆ section headings breaking up the information, evidence, and arguments you are using into a clear and logical structure ◆ references to the evidence you have used and, in particular, the sources on your research sheet ◆ a formal style which refers to evidence rather than just your own opinions ◆ language and terminology appropriate to the issue ◆ a clear statement of the decision you have reached

Administrative information

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History of changes

Version	Description of change	Date
2.0	Penalty for non-submission of research sheet added to 'Instructions for teachers and lecturers' and 'Instructions for candidates' sections.	August 2019
3.0	Penalty for non-submission of research sheet removed from 'Instructions for teachers and lecturers' and 'Instructions for candidates' sections. Amendments made to tables, for accessibility.	September 2024

Note: you are advised to check SQA's website to ensure you are using the most up-to-date version of this document.

Security and confidentiality

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