



National 5 Modern Studies

Course code:	C849 75
Course assessment code:	X849 75
SCQF:	level 5 (24 SCQF credit points)
Valid from:	session 2024–25

The course specification provides detailed information about the course and course assessment to ensure consistent and transparent assessment year on year. It describes the structure of the course and the course assessment in terms of the skills, knowledge and understanding that are assessed.

This document is for teachers and lecturers and contains all the mandatory information you need to deliver the course.

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Course overview

The course consists of 24 SCQF credit points which includes time for preparation for course assessment. The notional length of time for a candidate to complete the course is 160 hours.

The course assessment has two components.

Component	Marks	Duration
Component 1: question paper	80	2 hours and 20 minutes
Component 2: assignment	20	1 hour

Recommended entry	Progression
<p>Entry to this course is at the discretion of the centre.</p> <p>Candidates should have achieved the fourth curriculum level or the National 4 Modern Studies course or equivalent qualifications and/or experience prior to starting this course.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ other qualifications in Modern Studies or related areas◆ further study, employment or training

Conditions of award

The grade awarded is based on the total marks achieved across all course assessment components.

Course rationale

National courses reflect Curriculum for Excellence values, purposes and principles. They offer flexibility, provide more time for learning, more focus on skills and applying learning, and scope for personalisation and choice.

Every course provides opportunities for candidates to develop breadth, challenge and application. The focus and balance of assessment is tailored to each subject area.

The National 5 Modern Studies course encourages candidates to develop a greater understanding of the contemporary world and their place in it. They also have opportunities to develop important attitudes such as respect for the values, beliefs and cultures of others; openness to new thinking and ideas; and a sense of responsibility and global citizenship.

The course emphasises the development and application of skills. The focus on evaluating sources and making decisions develops thinking skills, as well as skills in literacy and numeracy. Investigative and critical thinking activities give candidates opportunities to gain important experience in contributing to group work and working on their own.

Purpose and aims

The course uses a multidisciplinary approach to develop candidates' knowledge and understanding of contemporary political and social issues in local, Scottish, United Kingdom and international contexts. Candidates develop the skills to interpret and participate in the social and political processes they will encounter in their lives.

Candidates develop:

- ◆ a range of research and information-handling skills including: evaluating information/evidence in order to support and oppose a view; making decisions and drawing conclusions; constructing detailed arguments; communicating views, opinions, decisions and conclusions based on evidence
- ◆ detailed understanding of the democratic process
- ◆ detailed understanding of social and economic issues at local, Scottish, national and international levels
- ◆ ways of addressing needs and inequalities
- ◆ an understanding of different views about the extent of state involvement in society
- ◆ an understanding of the nature and processes of conflict resolution
- ◆ an understanding of human and legal rights and responsibilities and their application in different societies

Who is this course for?

The course is appropriate for a wide range of learners, from those who wish to achieve a greater understanding of contemporary society and their place in it, to those wishing to progress to more specialised training, further education or employment.

Course content

The National 5 Modern Studies course has three areas of study: Democracy in Scotland and the United Kingdom; Social Issues in the United Kingdom; International Issues. There is considerable flexibility in the themes which can be studied within each area in order to allow for personalisation and choice.

Skills, knowledge and understanding

Skills, knowledge and understanding for the course

The following provides a broad overview of the subject skills, knowledge and understanding developed in the course:

- ◆ developing and applying detailed skills, knowledge and understanding in political, social or international contexts
- ◆ with guidance, researching and using information collected from a range of sources about contemporary issues which are mostly familiar
- ◆ using a range of sources of information to support and oppose views
- ◆ giving detailed justifications for decisions
- ◆ giving detailed support for valid conclusions
- ◆ demonstrating knowledge and understanding of the main democratic processes, institutions and organisations which make up political life in Scotland and/or the UK by giving factual descriptions and detailed explanations
- ◆ demonstrating knowledge and understanding of a major social issue in Scotland and the UK, focusing on either social inequality or crime and the law, by giving factual descriptions and detailed explanations
- ◆ demonstrating knowledge and understanding of an international issue, relating to either a significant world power or contemporary world issue, by giving factual descriptions and detailed explanations

Skills, knowledge and understanding for the course assessment

The following provides details of skills, knowledge and understanding sampled in the course assessment.

Component 1: question paper

The question paper has three sections. Candidates must answer one part from each section. There are options in each section to allow opportunities for personalisation and choice. The question paper will sample from the knowledge and understanding as follows:

Section 1: Democracy in Scotland and the United Kingdom

Candidates develop knowledge and understanding of the UK's political system, including the place of Scotland within this system. Candidates then have a choice of contexts for study which are drawn from **either** the Scottish political system **or** the United Kingdom's political system. Candidates develop knowledge and understanding of the main institutions and organisations which make up political life in their chosen context. They develop knowledge and understanding of the ways in which society is informed about, able to participate in and influence the political system. They develop an understanding of their rights and responsibilities in contemporary democratic political society.

Knowledge and understanding

Option 1: Democracy in Scotland	Option 2: Democracy in the UK
<p>Power and decision-making</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ features of a democratic political society ◆ devolved and reserved matters ◆ role and powers of Scottish First Minister <p>Participation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ rights and responsibilities of individuals ◆ opportunities for individuals ◆ elections and campaigning (role of individuals, political parties and the media) <p>Influence</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ the media <i>and either</i> ◆ pressure groups <i>or</i> ◆ trade unions <p>(Study of the group/organisation chosen should focus on role, purpose, aims, methods and critical evaluation of the extent to which influence is exercised in democracy.)</p> <p>Representation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ role of MSPs ◆ representation of women and minority groups ◆ purpose, function and composition of Committees in the Scottish Parliament <p>Voting systems</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ key features and outcomes of the system used to elect MSPs to the Scottish Parliament, including the strengths and weaknesses of this system 	<p>Power and decision-making</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ features of a democratic political society ◆ devolved and reserved matters ◆ role and powers of Prime Minister <p>Participation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ rights and responsibilities of individuals ◆ opportunities for individuals ◆ elections and campaigning (role of individuals, political parties and the media) <p>Influence</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ the media <i>and either</i> ◆ pressure groups <i>or</i> ◆ trade unions <p>(Study of the group/organisation chosen should focus on role, purpose, aims, methods and critical evaluation of the extent to which influence is exercised in democracy.)</p> <p>Representation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ role of MPs ◆ representation of women and minority groups ◆ purpose, function and composition of the House of Lords <p>Voting systems</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ key features and outcomes of the system used to elect MPs to the UK Parliament, including the strengths and weaknesses of this system

Section 2: Social Issues in the United Kingdom

Candidates have a choice of social issues within Scotland and the UK. Contexts for study focus on either social inequality or crime and the law.

In the social inequality context, candidates focus on social and economic aspects of contemporary social inequality in the UK. They develop knowledge and understanding of the causes and consequences of social inequality and attempts by government, other organisations and individuals to tackle it.

In the crime and the law context, candidates focus on the nature, extent and causes of crime, the impact of crime on individuals and society and the role of individuals, the police, the legal system and the state in tackling crime.

For course assessment, knowledge and understanding and critical evaluation of Social Inequalities or Crime and the Law must be able to be applied across **at least two** of the following groups:

- ◆ social class
- ◆ age
- ◆ gender
- ◆ minority groups

Knowledge and understanding

Option 1: Social Inequality	Option 2: Crime and the Law
<p>Nature of social inequality</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ nature and extent of inequality in Scotland and/or the UK ◆ evidence of social inequalities in Scotland and/or the UK, such as official reports and academic research <p>Causes of social and economic inequality</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ employment/unemployment ◆ income ◆ educational attainment ◆ discrimination <p>Consequences of social and economic inequality</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ on individuals ◆ on families ◆ on communities ◆ on wider society <p>Responses to social inequality</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Government responses <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — government responses to inequality — effectiveness of government responses ◆ Private sector <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — private sector responses to inequality — effectiveness of private responses ◆ Voluntary sector <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — voluntary sector responses to inequality — effectiveness of voluntary sector responses 	<p>Nature of crime</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ nature and extent of crime in Scotland and/or the UK ◆ evidence of crime in Scotland and/or the UK, such as official reports and academic research <p>Causes of crime</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ social causes and explanations of crime ◆ economic causes and explanations of crime ◆ biological causes and explanations of crime <p>Consequences of crime</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ on perpetrators ◆ on victims ◆ on families ◆ on communities ◆ on wider society <p>Criminal justice system</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ role and structure of the criminal courts (including the children’s hearing system) ◆ powers of the criminal courts (including the children’s hearing system) ◆ effectiveness of criminal courts in tackling crime <p>Responses to crime</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Government responses <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — government responses to crime — effectiveness of government responses ◆ Police <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — role, structure and powers of the police in Scotland — effectiveness of the police in Scotland in tackling crime ◆ Prisons <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — purpose and effectiveness of prisons — purpose and effectiveness of alternatives to prisons

Section 3: International Issues

Candidates have a choice of contexts for study. Contexts for study must be either a socio-economic and political study of a major world power or a significant world issue.

The study of a world power focuses on the political system of the world power, its international relations and socio-economic issues within the major world power. The major world power studied **must** be drawn from one of the G7 countries (excluding the UK) or one of the following: Brazil, China, India, Russia, South Africa.

The study of a world issue focuses on a significant recent issue, its causes and consequences, and attempts at resolution. The world issue studied must be a contemporary issue which impacts on a number of countries. The world issue must draw from one of the following global issues:

- ◆ a significant regional or international conflict (war or terrorism)
- ◆ a significant regional or international economic issue
- ◆ a significant regional or international humanitarian issue

Knowledge and understanding

Option 1: World Power	Option 2: World Issue
<p>Political system</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ political system ◆ participation ◆ representation <p>Influence on other countries</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ political influence ◆ economic influence ◆ military influence <p>Social and economic issues</p> <p><i>A minimum of three issues should be studied. At least one issue covered should be a social issue and one an economic issue.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ employment ◆ poverty/inequality ◆ population movement ◆ health ◆ education ◆ crime and the law <p>Effectiveness in tackling social and economic issues</p> <p><i>A minimum of three issues should be studied. At least one issue covered should be a social issue and one an economic issue.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ employment ◆ poverty/inequality ◆ population movement ◆ health ◆ education ◆ crime and the law 	<p>Nature and causes of the conflict/issue</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ political causes ◆ social causes ◆ economic causes <p>Consequences of the conflict/issue</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ impact on those immediately affected ◆ impact on other countries and their governments (including the UK) ◆ regional and/or wider international consequences <p>Attempts to resolve the conflict/issue</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ bilateral, regional and/or international organisations — role and motivation ◆ military attempts to resolve conflict/issues ◆ non-military attempts to resolve conflict/issues <p>Evaluation of international organisation(s) in tackling the conflict/issue</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ evidence of success/failure ◆ reasons for success/failure ◆ consequences of success/failure

Component 2: assignment

Candidates have an open choice of a Modern Studies topic or issue. Their choice should refer to a contemporary political, social or international issue and should not be constrained by the content of the question paper.

Skills, knowledge and understanding included in the course are appropriate to the SCQF level of the course. The SCQF level descriptors give further information on characteristics and expected performance at each SCQF level (www.scqf.org.uk).

Skills for learning, skills for life and skills for work

This course helps candidates to develop broad, generic skills. These skills are based on [SQA's Skills Framework: Skills for Learning, Skills for Life and Skills for Work](#) and draw from the following main skills areas:

1 Literacy

1.1 Reading

1.2 Writing

2 Numeracy

2.3 Information handling

4 Employability, enterprise and citizenship

4.6 Citizenship

5 Thinking skills

5.3 Applying

5.4 Analysing and evaluating

These skills must be built into the course where there are appropriate opportunities and the level should be appropriate to the level of the course.

Further information on building in skills for learning, skills for life and skills for work is given in the course support notes.

Course assessment

Course assessment is based on the information provided in this document.

The course assessment meets the key purposes and aims of the course by addressing:

- ◆ breadth — drawing on knowledge and skills from across the course
- ◆ challenge — requiring greater depth or extension of knowledge and/or skills
- ◆ application — requiring application of knowledge and/or skills in practical or theoretical contexts as appropriate

This enables candidates to:

- ◆ draw on, extend and apply the skills, knowledge and understanding they have acquired during the course
- ◆ extend and apply their skills, knowledge and understanding

Skills, knowledge and understanding included in the course are appropriate to the SCQF level of the course. The SCQF level descriptors give further information on characteristics and expected performance at each SCQF level (www.scqf.org.uk).

Course assessment structure: question paper

Question paper

80 marks

The question paper allows candidates to demonstrate application of the following skills and breadth of knowledge and understanding from the skills, knowledge and understanding for the course assessment section:

- ◆ supporting and opposing a view using a limited range of sources of information
- ◆ making and justifying a decision using a limited range of sources of information
- ◆ drawing and supporting conclusions using a limited range of sources of information
- ◆ giving detailed descriptions and explanations with some analysis

The question paper has three sections. Each section has two optional parts and in each option, candidates must answer four questions: three questions assess knowledge and understanding; the fourth question assesses evaluating skills using sources.

Each section comprises restricted/extended-response questions requiring candidates to draw on the knowledge and understanding and apply the skills acquired during the course. There is differentiation within each question.

Section 1: Democracy in Scotland and the United Kingdom

Candidates have the option of answering questions on democracy in Scotland or democracy in the United Kingdom.

Section 2: Social Issues in the United Kingdom

Candidates have the option of answering questions on social inequality or crime and the law.

Section 3: International Issues

Candidates have the option of answering questions on world powers or world issues.

The question paper component has 80 marks out of a total of 100 marks for course assessment. The question paper is therefore worth 80% of the overall marks for the course assessment.

Setting, conducting and marking the question paper

The question paper is set and marked by SQA, and conducted in centres under conditions specified for external examinations by SQA. Candidates complete this in 2 hours and 20 minutes.

Specimen question papers for National 5 courses are published on SQA's website. These illustrate the standard, structure and requirements of the question papers candidates sit. The specimen papers also include marking instructions.

Course assessment structure: assignment

Assignment

20 marks

The assignment allows candidates to demonstrate challenge and application by demonstrating the following skills, knowledge and understanding:

- ◆ choosing, with minimum support, an appropriate Modern Studies topic or issue
- ◆ finding at least two sources, of different types, as independently as possible, and collecting relevant evidence from them
- ◆ evaluating the effectiveness of the two sources used, commenting on their specific strengths and weaknesses
- ◆ applying Modern Studies skills to the evidence collected
- ◆ drawing on knowledge and understanding to explain and analyse key features of the topic or issue
- ◆ reaching a well-supported conclusion, supported by evidence, about the topic or issue

Candidates use specified resources during the production of evidence stage. A structured template is available for the production of evidence.

The assignment component has 20 marks out of a total of 100 marks for course assessment. The assignment is therefore worth 20% of the overall marks for the course assessment.

Setting, conducting and marking the assignment

The assignment is set by centres within SQA guidelines. SQA provides a brief for the generation of evidence to be assessed. Candidates have an open choice of contemporary Modern Studies topic or issue to research. Evidence is submitted to SQA for external marking. All marking is quality assured by SQA.

The assignment has two stages:

- ◆ research
- ◆ production of evidence

Time

In the research stage, candidates choose a topic or issue which allows them to analyse a contemporary issue. They research the issue and organise their findings to address the topic, using the specified resources collected during their research to support them in the production of evidence. The research stage is designed to be capable of completion over a notional period of 8 hours.

Candidates should undertake the research stage at any appropriate point in the course. This will normally be when they have developed the necessary skills, knowledge and understanding.

The production of evidence for assessment must be completed within 1 hour and in one sitting. Candidates should undertake the production of evidence stage in time to meet the submission date set by SQA.

Supervision, control and authentication

The research stage is conducted under some supervision and control. This means that, although candidates may complete part of the work outwith the learning and teaching setting, assessors should put in place processes for monitoring progress and ensuring that the work is the candidate's own and that plagiarism has not taken place. For example:

- ◆ interim progress meetings with candidates
- ◆ questioning
- ◆ candidate's record of activity/progress
- ◆ assessor observation

Group work approaches are acceptable as part of the research stage. However, there must be clear evidence for each candidate to show that they have met the evidence requirements.

The production of evidence stage is conducted under a high degree of supervision and control. This means that candidates:

- ◆ must be in direct sight of the assessor (or other responsible person) during the assessment
- ◆ must not communicate with each other
- ◆ should have access only to their Modern Studies Research Sheet

Resources

During the research stage, there are no restrictions on the resources to which candidates may have access. During the final production of evidence stage, candidates should have access only to their Modern Studies Research Sheet.

The purpose of the Modern Studies Research Sheet is to help candidates in presenting the findings of their research and applying their skills, knowledge and understanding. The Research Sheet is not marked. However, it must be included with the assignment from the candidate.

Reasonable assistance

Assessors should provide reasonable guidance on the types of topic or issue which will enable candidates to meet all the requirements of the assignment. They may also guide candidates as to the likely availability and accessibility of resources for their chosen topic or issue.

Candidates should work on their research with minimum support from the assessor.

Assessors must exercise their professional responsibility in ensuring that evidence submitted by a candidate is the candidate's own work.

Candidates must undertake the production of evidence independently. However, reasonable assistance may be provided prior to the production of evidence taking place. The term 'reasonable assistance' is used to try to balance the need for support with the need to avoid giving too much assistance. If a candidate requires more than what is deemed to be 'reasonable assistance', they may not be ready for assessment or it may be that they have been entered for the wrong level of qualification.

Reasonable assistance may be given on a generic basis to a class or group of candidates, eg advice on how to develop a project plan. It may also be given to candidates on an individual basis. When reasonable assistance is given on a one-to-one basis in the context of something that a candidate has already produced or demonstrated, there is a danger that it becomes support for assessment and assessors need to be aware that this may be going beyond reasonable assistance.

In the research stage, reasonable assistance may include:

- ◆ directing candidates to the instructions for candidates
- ◆ clarifying instructions/requirements of the task
- ◆ advising candidates on the choice of a topic or issue
- ◆ advising candidates on possible sources of information
- ◆ arranging visits to enable gathering of evidence
- ◆ interim progress checks

In preparing for the production of evidence stage, reasonable assistance may include advising candidates of the nature and volume of specified resources which may be used to support the production of evidence.

At any stage, reasonable assistance does not include:

- ◆ providing the topic or issue for the candidate
- ◆ directing candidates to specific resources to be used
- ◆ providing model answers
- ◆ providing detailed feedback on drafts, including marking

Evidence to be gathered

The candidate evidence required for this assessment is:

- ◆ completed assignment produced under a high degree of supervision on the Modern Studies report template
- ◆ the Modern Studies Research Sheet which is limited to two single-sided sheets of A4

Volume

There is no word count for the assignment; however the Research Sheet is limited to two single-sided sheets of A4.

Grading

A candidate's overall grade is determined by their performance across the course assessment. The course assessment is graded A–D on the basis of the total mark for all course assessment components.

Grade description for C

For the award of grade C, candidates will typically have demonstrated successful performance in relation to the skills, knowledge and understanding for the course.

Grade description for A

For the award of grade A, candidates will typically have demonstrated a consistently high level of performance in relation to the skills, knowledge and understanding for the course.

Equality and inclusion

This course is designed to be as fair and as accessible as possible with no unnecessary barriers to learning or assessment.

For guidance on assessment arrangements for disabled candidates and/or those with additional support needs, please follow the link to the assessment arrangements web page: www.sqa.org.uk/assessmentarrangements

Further information

The following reference documents provide useful information and background.

- ◆ [National 5 Modern Studies subject page](#)
- ◆ [Assessment arrangements](#)
- ◆ [Building the Curriculum 3–5](#)
- ◆ [Guidance on conditions of assessment for coursework](#)
- ◆ [Guide to Assessment](#)
- ◆ [Recent SQA research](#)
- ◆ [Remote assessment](#)
- ◆ [SCQF Handbook](#)
- ◆ [Know Your SCQF Level - Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework](#)
- ◆ [SQA's Skills Framework: Skills for Learning, Skills for Life and Skills for Work](#)

Appendix: course support notes

Introduction

These support notes are not mandatory. They provide advice and guidance to teachers and lecturers on approaches to delivering the course. They should be read in conjunction with this course specification and the specimen question paper and/or coursework.

Developing skills, knowledge and understanding

This section provides further advice and guidance about skills, knowledge and understanding that could be included in the course. Teachers and lecturers should refer to this course specification for the skills, knowledge and understanding for the course assessment. Course planners have considerable flexibility to select coherent contexts which will stimulate and challenge their candidates, offering both breadth and depth.

Approaches to learning, teaching and assessment

The National 5 Modern Studies course is a study of aspects of contemporary society. There are opportunities throughout the course to reinforce and deepen learning by making links between aspects of knowledge and understanding, depending on the particular topics and issues studied.

There is no recommended teaching order for this course. However, candidates should have the opportunity to study a range of topics before they choose a modern studies question for their assignment. The development of skills should be a part of learning and teaching from the outset to help candidates progressively build up their skills throughout the course.

Candidates learn best when they:

- ◆ understand clearly what they are trying to learn, and what is expected of them
- ◆ are given feedback about the quality of their work, and what they can do to make it better
- ◆ are given advice about how to make improvements and are fully involved in deciding what needs to be done next
- ◆ know who can help them if they need it

Teachers and lecturers should:

- ◆ encourage and support independent learning
- ◆ help candidates understand the requirements of the course by sharing learning/assessment criteria
- ◆ deliver effective feedback
- ◆ encourage candidates to set their own learning objectives
- ◆ encourage candidates to assess the extent of their existing knowledge
- ◆ encourage self- and peer-evaluation
- ◆ question effectively using higher order questioning when appropriate

Using assessment for formative purposes can help raise attainment by:

- ◆ giving feedback
- ◆ detailing progress
- ◆ identifying candidates' strengths and areas for development

Preparing for course assessment

Question paper

Candidates' responses to knowledge and understanding (KU) questions should include attempts to expand answers using specific, contemporary 'real world', current examples. Candidates should follow the rubric of KU questions that ask for 'two ways'/'maximum of three reasons' and ensure that their responses follow these instructions. Writing more should be avoided as only the best two/three points in an answer gain credit.

Candidates should fully develop points within their answers to explain KU questions by attempting some form of analysis. This ensures developed points within their answers may be credited the maximum 4 marks available for a single, fully developed point.

Candidates' responses to skills questions should compare statistics, show changes over time, show differences, and make evaluative comments. Candidates should use terminology such as 'significant increase/decrease' and 'showing similarities/differences' when analysing information.

Candidates' responses to the option/decision-making skills question should always explicitly state which option they have chosen and whether they support or oppose a point of view. This allows candidates to give a more structured response. Candidates should also understand the requirements of part (iii) of the options question — 'explain why you did not choose the other option' — and respond to this appropriately.

Candidates' responses to conclusion skills questions should make clear which bullet-pointed conclusion is being addressed — the use of sub-headings may help with this and give focus to candidates' responses. To be fully credited, points should be developed by making an original and insightful conclusion which is supported by more than one piece of evidence drawn from either two sources, or from different parts of the same source.

Assignment

Choosing an appropriate modern studies issue or topic

Candidates must choose a topic that clearly addresses a relevant, contemporary modern studies issue. Candidates are advised not to combine modern studies topics with assignments in other subjects to avoid using irrelevant or historical information, eg accounts/descriptions of historical crimes/criminals; euthanasia; animal rights; death penalty; or corruption in sport.

Modern studies research sheet

Candidates should use the research sheet (two single-sided sheets of A4) to provide evidence that they have carried out their own research. Candidates must not use it as a plan. Direct copying from research sheets attracts no credit and, where research evidence is not identified, full marks cannot be achieved. Any 'coded' research evidence will also be treated as direct copying.

Research methods

In the 'research methods' section of the assignment candidates should critically evaluate two methods they used during the course of their research. Responses which make generic comments about the research methods or make no specific reference to candidates' own research will be awarded no marks.

Findings

In the 'findings' section of the assignment candidates should demonstrate detailed knowledge of their chosen topic. Candidates' responses can refer to knowledge acquired during the research process which goes beyond their aims. Information which corresponds to candidates' conclusions on the issue should not be included in this section. To access the full range of marks available for 'findings', candidates' responses must make at least one direct link in this section to the research methods.

Conclusions

Candidates who have used the hypothesis and aims approach could address these in the conclusions section of their report. Candidates who have carried out a survey could make detailed, well-supported conclusions from their research and these may be used in this section to access the full range of marks. Responses that repeat information already referred to in the 'findings' section gain no credit.

Developing skills for learning, skills for life and skills for work

Course planners should identify opportunities throughout the course for candidates to develop skills for learning, skills for life and skills for work.

Candidates should be aware of the skills they are developing and teachers and lecturers can provide advice on opportunities to practise and improve them.

SQA does not formally assess skills for learning, skills for life and skills for work.

There may also be opportunities to develop additional skills depending on approaches being used to deliver the course in each centre. This is for individual teachers and lecturers to manage.

Further advice on how skills for learning, skills for life and skills for work may be developed is included below.

1 Literacy

Modern studies lends itself to the development of literacy skills, particularly reading and writing. Candidates should be encouraged to read as widely as possible and produce extended writing where appropriate in order to facilitate progression to other qualifications in modern studies or related areas, and the world of work. They are likely to experience listening and talking skills during class discussions and debates.

In the course, candidates have the opportunity to develop many aspects of literacy. For example, they may read a variety of texts about the topic or issue they are studying, including a range of newspapers in print or electronic form. They may study these alongside academic research or government reports at an appropriate level. This means that they are able to consider many different types of text and consider their benefits and limitations in terms of providing information to help them complete their assignment.

The National 5 Modern Studies assignment also allows for considerable scope for the development of writing skills. Candidates may describe and summarise the research they have carried out, assess and evaluate the value of different sources, and express opinions and viewpoints, as well as personally reflect upon what has been learned.

1.1 Reading

Candidates in modern studies develop their literacy skills in significant ways by reading:

- ◆ newspapers (can also develop skills of supporting and opposing views using facts etc)
- ◆ campaign literature, eg political party/pressure group leaflets, posters, information on website
- ◆ blogs
- ◆ diaries
- ◆ selecting relevant information from a source

1.2 Writing

Candidates in modern studies develop their writing skills in the following ways:

- ◆ creating questionnaires/surveys
- ◆ creating interview questions
- ◆ writing letters to representatives
- ◆ creating political party manifestos, local crime reports, country factfiles etc
- ◆ developing note-taking skills by selecting, for example:
 - key points of information from the UK or Scottish Parliament website
 - relevant information from a range of crime and law resources
 - key points from audio/visual material on a world issue
 - information from websites or from media clips/DVDs watched in class

- ◆ drafting and re-drafting summaries from notes
- ◆ preparing notes for participation in discussion and debate
- ◆ organising thoughts by completing a concept map with detailed information for revision purposes
- ◆ drafting and re-drafting materials for a report or essay on an issue
- ◆ refining thoughts by writing a review of their own work and noting plans for improvement
- ◆ communicating purposefully by writing a talk on a particular issue to be presented to the class

2 Numeracy

Skills of numeracy are developed through the evaluation of a range of numerical, statistical and graphical sources of information during source-based tasks and through research opportunities.

The source-handling experiences of modern studies provide opportunities to tackle a range of graphs, tables and charts:

- ◆ For political issues there are numerous sources of data on recent elections which candidates could access, or be introduced to, and tasked with transforming into a pictograph.
- ◆ For social issues candidates could design and carry out surveys or questionnaires on poverty or crime and present the data collected in a table or graph.
- ◆ For any world power there is official statistical data which candidates could access for research purposes. Candidates could take data and transform it into another form, eg information in a table format on health statistics and turn it into a bar graph.
- ◆ For international issues the United Nations may be a good source of statistical information. Candidates could be given a limited amount of data to convert into a simple format to present to the rest of the class.
- ◆ Candidates could research a particular aspect in pairs or small groups and construct a source question, replicating the demands of the question paper, for the rest of the class to complete, eg small groups could research information on a different social or economic issue for their focus country.
- ◆ Candidates should be able to draw conclusions based on data/information and be able to consider the reliability of such evidence.

Teachers and lecturers should use statistical sources to create appropriate tasks across the full range of modern studies source-based questions.

2.3 Information handling

In their study of political, social and international issues, candidates encounter and use a wide range of numerical, graphical and pictorial information. They are required to handle statistical information in a range of formats, eg line graphs, pie charts, bar graphs. They should use information from a range of sources and be able to evaluate this data by supporting and opposing points of view, supporting decisions and drawing conclusions.

There are many ways of developing these skills, eg in the political issues area of study candidates could be given the results of several recent General Election results in tables or in bar graphs. Information could include the percentage of seats and percentage of votes a political party received, or the number/percentage of women or representatives from minority ethnic groups.

Candidates would be expected to reach an overall conclusion in relation to:

- ◆ fairness in representation, eg political parties who received a disproportionate number of seats in relation to number of votes secured
- ◆ under representation, eg candidates could identify those groups which have not received a proportionate number of representatives to their number in the UK as a whole
- ◆ identifying trends over time, eg number of smaller political parties — has support increased/decreased? Candidates could then use the identified trend to undertake more research and examine possible explanations for these trends

4 Employability, enterprise and citizenship

4.6 Citizenship

By studying democracy in the UK and Scotland and, where the study of a world power is chosen, the political system of a country or the EU, candidates develop political literacy and explore key concepts such as: participation; representation, rights and responsibilities; and decision-making in society — all central to the themes of citizenship.

Candidates can develop their political literacy and citizenship skills in the following ways:

- ◆ writing a letter to a local or national representative
- ◆ visiting a local representative at their surgery or office
- ◆ visiting local council chambers, the Scottish Parliament or the UK Parliament
- ◆ inviting an MSP, MP, local councillor or trades union representative to speak to the class — questions for interview can be prepared by candidates in advance
- ◆ participating in debates:
 - participating in/leading whole school or class elections
 - delivering speeches, eg as a candidate in a mock election
 - working as part of a team, eg as a political party trying to get elected

By examining social issues, either within the social inequality or crime and the law areas of study, candidates develop an understanding of the issues of diversity and equality.

Social issues and their impact on individuals and society provide rich opportunities for candidates to consider and reflect upon their attitudes towards society, and their place and the place of others within it. This area of study also offers candidates the opportunity to deepen their understanding of the way society works and issues they may encounter in the future.

Whatever the international issue taught, it should be possible to have a focus on rights within that issue. The United Nations Convention on Human Rights and the Convention on the

Rights of the Child would be ideal documents to use here. Candidates could be issued with the full list of the Rights of the Child and asked to identify the rights which they felt were most important for the issue they are studying. This could then form the basis of further class discussion, debate or research.

Candidates could look at the ways individuals can voice their views about an international issue or conflict. This area of study also offers candidates opportunities to address the issues of interdependence and global interconnectedness. Active participation in global issues could be highlighted through school support for developmental charities; involvement in environmental projects; or increased awareness of the role of environmental and rights pressure groups. By studying international issues and other societies candidates develop a wider and deeper perspective on significant international issues and aspects of life in other societies.

5 Thinking skills

5.3 Applying

5.4 Analysing and evaluating

Candidates develop their knowledge and understanding of contemporary issues and events and are able to apply their knowledge to real events and issues. The course encourages the remembering of information, the analysing of information from sources and from acquired knowledge, and the evaluation of different types of evidence and viewpoints. Candidates demonstrate these skills through class work, formally assessed tasks and the course assessment.

The course involves candidates in extensive work to analyse and evaluate different sources of information. Any piece of information, or source, can yield more or less relevant study material, depending on the skills of the candidate. Teachers and lecturers should use their judgement to direct more able candidates to more complex, and potentially richer sources of information.

The assignment element of the course assessment requires candidates to plan, organise, research and develop notes on a topic or issue of their choice. Based on this research they are then required to write a critical evaluation of their research methods, their key findings, and the conclusions they reached under controlled conditions.

Administrative information

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History of changes to course specification

Version	Description of change	Date
2.0	Course support notes added as appendix.	August 2017
3.0	Penalty for non-submission of Research Sheet added to 'Evidence to be gathered' section.	July 2019
4.0	Penalty for non-submission of Research Sheet removed from 'Evidence to be gathered' section. 'Further information' section updated. Amendments to tables to make them accessible.	September 2024

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