



Advanced Higher  
Course  
Specification



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# Advanced Higher Modern Studies Course Specification (C749 77)

**Valid from August 2015**

This edition: April 2015, version 1.1

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Please refer to the note of changes at the end of this Course Specification for details of changes from previous version (where applicable).

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## Course outline

**Course title:** Modern Studies (Advanced Higher)

**SCQF:** level 7 (32 SCQF credit points)

**Course code:** C749 77

### Mandatory Units

All learners will study the following **two** mandatory Units.

**H7X4 77 Modern Studies: Contemporary Issues  
(Advanced Higher) 16 SCQF credit points**

**H7X5 77 Modern Studies: Researching Contemporary Issues  
(Advanced Higher) 8 SCQF credit points**

**Course assessment 8 SCQF credit points**

This Course includes eight SCQF credit points to allow additional time for preparation for Course assessment. The Course assessment covers the added value of the Course. Further information on the Course assessment is provided in the Assessment section.

### Recommended entry

Entry to this Course is at the discretion of the centre. However, learners would normally be expected to have attained the skills, knowledge and understanding required by the following or equivalent qualifications and/or experience:

- ◆ Modern Studies (Higher) Course
- ◆ Politics (Higher) Course
- ◆ Sociology (Higher) Course

### Progression

This Course or its Units may provide progression to:

- ◆ degree courses in social subjects and social sciences or related areas
- ◆ a diverse range of careers

Further details are provided in the Rationale section.

### Equality and inclusion

This Course Specification has been designed to ensure that there are no unnecessary barriers to learning or assessment. The individual needs of learners should be taken into account when planning learning experiences, selecting assessment methods or considering alternative evidence. For further information, please refer to the *Course/Unit Support Notes*.

## **Rationale**

All new and revised 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.

In this Course, and its component Units, there will be an emphasis on skills development and the application of those skills. Assessment approaches will be proportionate, fit for purpose and will promote best practice, enabling learners to achieve the highest standards they can.

This Course provides learners with opportunities to continue to acquire and develop the attributes and capabilities of the four capacities, as well as skills for learning, skills for life and skills for work.

All Courses provide opportunities for learners to develop breadth, challenge and application, but the focus and balance of the assessment will be appropriate for the subject area.

## **Relationship between the Course and Curriculum for Excellence values, purposes and principles**

This Course will encourage learners to develop important attitudes, including: an open mind and respect for the values, beliefs and cultures of others; openness to new thinking and ideas; and a sense of responsibility and global citizenship.

Modern Studies enhances learner's understanding of the contemporary world and their place in it. By studying this Course, learners are challenged to develop the four capacities in many respects. Their confidence grows as they begin to understand more about their sense of identity and place in the contemporary world. Learners will build up a framework of social, political and economic knowledge and understanding which will help them develop a sense of responsible citizenship.

This Course allows learners to demonstrate autonomy in their learning. The researching and critical thinking skills developed throughout this Course give learners important experience in contributing to group work and also working independently. Learners will acquire attributes which will be important for their life and work such as the motivation and ability to work on their own initiative with minimal supervision. An important aspect of the Course involves learners carrying out independent research into a contemporary political or social issue.

This Course will also provide opportunities for learners to develop skills for learning, skills for life and skills for work. Through the skills and content of this Course, learners will develop an increased sense of responsible citizenship — locally, nationally and internationally. The emphasis on the critical evaluation and synthesis of a wide range of often complex information, ideas, concepts and issues will help hone higher order thinking skills. Learners will also further develop skills in literacy through using and presenting textual information in a variety of ways; and skills in numeracy through the evaluation of numerical, statistical and graphical information.

## **Purpose and aims of the Course**

The purpose of this Course is to develop learners' knowledge and understanding of contemporary political and social issues in local, Scottish/United Kingdom and international contexts. In these contexts, learners will develop an awareness of the political and social issues they will encounter in their lives. This purpose will be achieved through successful study of the Course Units which focus on in-depth study of either political issues or social issues and which adopt an international comparative approach and develop a wide range of skills.

This Course makes a distinctive contribution to the curriculum by drawing on the social sciences of politics, sociology and economics and, where appropriate, of associated ideas drawn from other social subjects. It thereby adopts a multidisciplinary approach. The Course will help create informed and active citizens by helping learners to develop a greater understanding of democratic political and social institutions and processes in Scotland/UK and international contexts. Learners will develop skills which are transferable to other areas of study and which they will use in everyday life.

At Advanced Higher level, learners will experience depth and challenge in the level of skills, knowledge and understanding required. Undertaking this Course will develop the skills of analysis, synthesis and evaluation. Learners will also demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the scope and main areas of the specific context studied. Development of research skills, alongside the ability to draw on a range of sources in making judgements or decisions are addressed at this level. All of this aims to support learners' independence of learning and their ability to work on their own initiative with supervision as appropriate.

This Course will enable learners to demonstrate autonomy in their learning through researching and analysing, extended writing, demonstrating independent study skills and applying critical thinking. They will also have the opportunity to develop skills in debate and discussion.

The main aims of this Course are to enable learners to:

- ◆ analyse the complex political and social processes that lead to an understanding of contemporary society
- ◆ understand and analyse complex political or social issues in the United Kingdom and adopt an international comparative approach
- ◆ develop a range of independent practical research skills leading to carrying out research into a contemporary issue
- ◆ present complex ideas in a range of ways
- ◆ analysing, evaluating, and synthesising a range of sources relating to complex issues
- ◆ develop a knowledge and understanding of social science research methods
- ◆ apply a multidisciplinary approach drawing on analysis from a range of social sciences

## **Information about typical learners who might do the Course**

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

Entry to this Course is at the discretion of the centre. However, it would be beneficial for learners to have the skills and knowledge required by the Higher Modern Studies Course, Higher Politics Course, Higher Sociology Course, Higher Economics Course or equivalent qualifications.

This Course is particularly suitable for learners who might wish to progress to degree courses in politics, sociology, international relations, law and/or other social science courses and to careers in law, journalism and the media, civil and public service, social work, human relations and in the third sector.

Through the successful completion of this Course, learners will develop a wide range of important and transferable skills, including the ability to: plan and carry out independent research; understand and use a wide range of evidence on contemporary issues; evaluate, analyse and synthesise evidence; construct arguments in a balanced and structured way; communicate, by a variety of means, views, opinions, decisions and conclusions based on evidence; apply knowledge and understanding about a range of contemporary political or social issues; and adopt a comparative approach.

Modern Studies Units and Courses are offered from SCQF level 3 to SCQF level 7. Vertical progression is possible through the levels of Modern Studies qualifications and lateral progression is possible to other qualifications in the Social Studies suite of Courses.

# Course structure and conditions of award

## Course structure

This Course has two mandatory Units. There is considerable flexibility in themes/topics that can be studied to allow personalisation and choice. The Units are:

### **Modern Studies: Contemporary Issues (Advanced Higher)**

In this Unit, learners will develop an in depth knowledge and understanding of contemporary political/social issues in the United Kingdom and adopt an international comparative approach to their study. Learners will develop skills to critically evaluate a range of sources of information and social science research methods.

### **Modern Studies: Researching Contemporary Issues (Advanced Higher)**

In this Unit, learners will develop skills of: justifying appropriate research issues; planning a programme of research; researching, collecting and recording information; explaining approaches to organising, presenting and referencing findings; and using an appropriate referencing system.

Units are statements of standards for assessment and not programmes of learning and teaching. They can be delivered in a number of ways.

## Conditions of award

To gain the award of the Course, the learner must pass all of the Units as well as the Course assessment. The required Units are shown in the Course outline section. Course assessment will provide the basis for grading attainment in the Course award.

## Skills, knowledge and understanding

Further information on the assessment of the skills, knowledge and understanding for the Course are given in the *Course Assessment Specification*. A broad overview of the mandatory subject skills, knowledge and understanding that will be assessed in the Course is given in this section.

This covers:

- ◆ applying knowledge and understanding of complex political or social issues in the United Kingdom and adopting an international comparative approach
- ◆ analysing complex political/social issues
- ◆ evaluating, analysing and synthesising a wide range of evidence
- ◆ structuring and sustaining detailed lines of argument, leading to reasoned conclusions
- ◆ evaluating the trustworthiness of sources of information
- ◆ critically evaluating research methods
- ◆ justifying appropriate complex, contemporary political/social issue research issues
- ◆ planning a programme of research
- ◆ researching, collecting and recording information
- ◆ explaining approaches to organising, presenting and referencing findings
- ◆ using an appropriate referencing system
- ◆ evaluating research methodology
- ◆ using a wide range of sources of information
- ◆ analysing the issue
- ◆ evaluating arguments and evidence
- ◆ synthesising information to develop a sustained and coherent line of argument, leading to a conclusion, supported by evidence
- ◆ organising, presenting and referencing findings using appropriate conventions

Skills, knowledge and understanding to be included in the Course will be 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.sqa.org.uk/scqf](http://www.sqa.org.uk/scqf)).

# Assessment

Information about assessment for the Course is included in the *Course Assessment Specification*, which provides full details including advice on how a learner's overall attainment for the Course will be determined.

## Unit assessment

All Units are internally assessed against the requirements shown in the *Unit Specification*.

They will be assessed on a pass/fail basis within centres. SQA will provide rigorous external quality assurance, including external verification, to ensure assessment judgments are consistent and meet national standards.

The assessment of the Units in this Course will be as follows:

### Modern Studies: Contemporary Issues (Advanced Higher)

In this Unit, the learner will be required to give evidence of the ability to:

- ◆ draw on knowledge and understanding to analyse complex political or social issues in the United Kingdom
- ◆ draw well-reasoned conclusions about a complex political or social issue
- ◆ critically evaluate social science research

### Modern Studies: Researching Contemporary Issues (Advanced Higher)

In this Unit, the learner will be required to give evidence of the ability to:

- ◆ develop independent research skills in the context of complex political or social issues

## Course assessment

Courses from National 4 to Advanced Higher include assessment of added value. At National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher, the added value will be assessed in the Course assessment. The added value for the Course must address the key purposes and aims of the Course, as defined in the Course Rationale. It will do this by addressing one or more of breadth, challenge or application.

In the Advanced Higher Modern Studies Course, added value will focus on:

- ◆ challenge
- ◆ application

The learner will draw on, extend and apply the knowledge and skills they have acquired during the Course. This will be assessed through a combination of a question paper and a [project](#)<sup>1</sup>. The [question paper](#)<sup>2</sup> will require demonstration of knowledge, understanding and skills from across the Course. The project will require learners to extend and apply their knowledge and skills and will be sufficiently open and flexible to allow for personalisation and choice.

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<sup>1</sup> Definitions can be found here: [www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/45528.html](http://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/45528.html)

<sup>2</sup> See link above for definition.



# Development of skills for learning, skills for life and skills for work

It is expected that learners will develop broad, generic skills through this Course. The skills that learners will be expected to improve on and develop through the Course are based on SQA's *Skills Framework: Skills for Learning, Skills for Life and Skills for Work* and drawn from the main skills areas listed below. These must be built into the Course where there are appropriate opportunities.

## **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

Amplification of these skills is given in SQA's *Skills Framework: Skills for Learning, Skills for Life and Skills for Work*. The level of these skills will be appropriate to the level of the Course. Further information on building in skills for learning, skills for life and skills for work for the Course is given in the *Course/Unit Support Notes*.

# Administrative information

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**Published:** April 2015 (version 1.1)

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## History of changes to National Course Specification

Course details	Version	Description of change	Authorised by	Date
	1.1	'Relationship between the Course and CfE values, purposes and principles', 'Purpose and aims' 'Information about typical learners' —amended to reflect skills more accurately and to show separation of three contexts for clarity. 'Course structure', 'Skills, knowledge and understanding' and 'Unit assessment' amended to reflect skills more accurately.	Qualifications Development Manager	April 2015

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