



Modern Studies: Contemporary Issues (Advanced Higher) Unit

SCQF: level 7 (16 SCQF credit points)

Unit code: to be advised

Unit outline

The general aims of this Unit are to develop factual and theoretical knowledge and understanding, in depth, of complex contemporary political or social issues in the United Kingdom while adopting an international comparative approach; develop skills of evaluation, analysis and synthesis of evidence on contemporary issues; and critically evaluate a range of social science research methods

Learners who complete this Unit will:

- 1 Draw on factual and theoretical knowledge and understanding of complex political or social issues in the United Kingdom
- 2 Evaluate a wide range of evidence about complex political or social issues
- 3 Critically evaluate a range of social science research methods

This Unit is a mandatory Unit of the Advanced Higher Modern Studies Course and is also available as a free-standing Unit. The Unit Specification should be read in conjunction with the *Course and Unit Support Notes*, which provide advice and guidance on delivery, assessment approaches and development of skills for learning, skills for life and skills for work. Exemplification of the standards in this Unit is given in *Unit Assessment Support*.

The *Course Assessment Specification* for the Advanced Higher Modern Studies Course gives further mandatory information on Course coverage for learners taking this Unit as part of the Advanced Higher Modern Studies Course.

Recommended entry

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

- ◆ Higher Modern Studies Course

Equality and inclusion

This Unit 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 and Unit Support Notes*.

Standards

Outcomes and assessment standards

Outcome 1

The learner will:

- 1 Draw on factual and theoretical knowledge and understanding of complex political or social issues in the United Kingdom by:**
 - 1.1 Showing knowledge and understanding, in depth, of a complex political or social issue
 - 1.2 Making international comparisons and contrasts about a complex political or social issue
 - 1.3 Analysing a complex political or social issue

Outcome 2

The learner will:

- 2 Evaluate a wide range of evidence about complex political or social issues by:**
 - 2.1 Analysing a wide range of evidence about a complex political or social issue
 - 2.2 Synthesising information from a range of sources of evidence showing a variety of viewpoints
 - 2.3 Making international comparisons and contrasts about a complex political or social issue
 - 2.4 Using evidence to make judgements and reach conclusions

Outcome 3

The learner will:

- 3 Critically evaluate a range of social science research methods by:**
 - 3.1 Describing, explaining and analysing the research methodology used by social science in the context of a political or social issue
 - 3.2 Commenting on moral and ethical issues arising from conducting social science research

Evidence Requirements for the Unit

Assessors should use their professional judgement, subject knowledge and experience, and understanding of their learners, to determine the most appropriate ways to generate evidence and the conditions and contexts in which they are used.

Evidence is required to show that the learner has met the Outcomes and Assessment Standards.

In this Unit learners will develop, in depth, contemporary knowledge and understanding of either political issues and research methods or social issues and research methods. The political issues and research methods context will involve a study of a range of complex political issues in the United Kingdom (including Scotland). Throughout their study, an international comparative approach should be adopted.

The social issues and research methods context will involve a study of a range of complex social issues in the United Kingdom (including Scotland). Throughout their study, an international comparative approach should be adopted. Within the social issues and research methods context, centres/learners may choose one from two broad areas of study: **either** law and order **or** social inequality.

The political or social issues studied should be drawn from the United Kingdom, with a range of relevant countries chosen in order to make international comparisons which allow learners to identify and explain similarities and differences and make judgements about the different approaches adopted.

The evidence used by learners should be of an appropriate level of complexity and should include sources such as: relevant academic research; government and other official data and research produced by other research bodies; evidence gathered from fieldwork. The sources of information used may be written, numerical, graphical, pictorial, audio-visual or oral.

The skills demonstrated should include the use of evidence to: draw and justify conclusions and make judgements; make and support decisions; and identify and explain the level of objectivity related to complex political or social issues.

The research methods to be considered should include:

- ◆ official statistics
- ◆ other researchers' data
- ◆ social surveys: sampling, designing surveys, conducting surveys, use of technology
- ◆ interviewing: structured, semi-structured and unstructured, group/focus interviews, designing interviews, conducting interviews
- ◆ participant observation
- ◆ document research: official documents from the state and from private sources, personal documents, media outputs, virtual (internet) outputs
- ◆ case studies

Learners should also consider:

- ◆ primary and secondary research
- ◆ reliability and validity of quantitative and qualitative research
- ◆ moral and ethical issues in research

This Unit is not intended to develop in-depth competence in applying quantitative techniques to political and/or social research.

Assessment evidence can be drawn from a variety of activities and presented in a variety of formats, including, for example, presentations, posters, detailed written responses to questions, and participation in group tasks. Not all of the evidence needs to be from one activity, but can be assembled from a variety of tasks and assessments carried out during the Course.

Evidence may be presented for individual Outcomes or gathered for the Unit as a whole.

Exemplification of assessment is provided in *Unit Assessment Support*. Advice and guidance on possible approaches to assessment is provided in the *Course and Unit Support Notes*.

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

It is expected that learners will develop broad, generic skills through this Unit. The skills that learners will be expected to improve on and develop through the Unit 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 Unit 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 is given in SQA's *Skills Framework: Skills for Learning, Skills for Life and Skills for Work*. The level of these skills should be at the same SCQF level as the Unit and be consistent with the SCQF level descriptor. Further information on building in skills for learning, skills for life and skills for work is given in the *Course and Unit Support Notes*.

Administrative information

Published: April 2013 (version 1.0)

Superclass: to be advised

History of changes to National Unit Specification

Version	Description of change	Authorised by	Date

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Note: readers are advised to check SQA's website: www.sqa.org.uk to ensure they are using the most up-to-date version of the Unit Specification.