



Advanced Higher Modern Studies — draft Course rationale and summary



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The Optima Building, 58 Robertson Street, Glasgow G2 8DQ
Lowden, 24 Wester Shawfair, Dalkeith, Midlothian EH22 1FD

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Contents

Course rationale	1
Background	1
Relationship between the Course and Curriculum for Excellence values, purposes and principles	2
Purpose and aims of the Course	2
Information about typical learners who might do the Course	4
Course summary	5
Course outline	5
Course structure and conditions of award	6
Course structure	6
Conditions of award	7
Assessment	8
Unit assessment	8
Course assessment	8

Course rationale

Background

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 learners' understanding of the contemporary world and their place in it. By studying this Course, learners are enabled to develop the four capacities in many respects. Learners' horizons are extended and they are challenged to look at the world in new ways. 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.

The investigative 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 ability to work on their own initiative with minimal supervision and have the motivation to do so. An important aspect of the Course involves learners in carrying out independent research into a contemporary political or social issue.

Through the skills and content of the Modern Studies 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 progressively develop skills in literacy through using and presenting 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 Modern Studies 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, social and economic issues they will meet in their lives. This purpose will be achieved through successful study of the Course Units which focus on an in-depth study of either political issues or social issues and which adopt an international comparative approach.

This Course contributes to general education and the wider curriculum. It will help create informed and active citizens by helping learners to develop a greater understanding of democratic political and social institutions and processes in 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 intellectually challenging skills of analysis, synthesis and evaluation. Learners will also demonstrate detailed and integrated knowledge and understanding of the scope and main areas of the specific Unit studied. Development of research and investigative 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' independent learning skills and their ability to work on their own initiative with supervision as appropriate. Writing skills will be enhanced and developed by writing extended essays and writing up the results of their research in the project. The project will develop important writing skills including the synthesis of a wide range of information, presenting complex information and ideas in an effective way and the use of referencing, bibliography, footnotes and associated IT skills.

Modern Studies 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 multi-disciplinary approach.

The main aims of Modern Studies 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 through carrying out research into a Modern Studies issue
- ◆ apply evaluating skills to a range of evidence 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

This Course is crucial in developing the learner's deeper knowledge and understanding by allowing opportunities to specialise and focus on specific aspects of complex issues and topics. It also develops a range of higher-order cognitive skills in relation to the topics covered at this level. Skills of analysis, critical evaluation and synthesis will all be developed throughout this Course.

Learners will develop an understanding of the differences between explanations based on evidence and/or research and other forms of explanation and the importance of this difference. They will carry out independent research to further develop their investigative skills and this will result in a research project. Learners must therefore take a high degree of responsibility for their own learning but with support as necessary from the teacher/lecturer/tutor and their peers. The nature of the learning and assessment supports this independence and responsibility.

Information about typical learners who might do the Course

This 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 learners who wish to progress to more specialised training or further education or employment.

The specific research and presentation skills developed through undertaking this Course and the general approach to independent work, self-motivation and individual initiative will stand learners in good stead as they progress to higher education and the world of work.

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 or equivalent qualifications. This Course is particularly suitable for learners who wish to progress to degree courses in politics, sociology, international relations, law and/or other social science courses.

Many professions and employment opportunities are based on a sound knowledge and understanding of the contemporary world and the unique skills developed in Modern Studies.

Important skills for learning, life and work are developed through the successful completion of this Course. These skills include: researching, understanding and using a wide range of evidence on contemporary issues; evaluating, analysing and synthesising evidence, making and justifying decisions, and drawing conclusions with justification; constructing arguments in a balanced and structured way; communicating, by a variety of means, views, opinions, decisions and conclusions based on evidence; and applying knowledge and understanding about a range contemporary political or social issues and being able to 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 summary

Course title: Advanced Higher Modern Studies

SCQF level 7 (32 SCQF credit points)

Course outline

Mandatory Units

The Course comprises the following mandatory Units:

Modern Studies: Political or Social Issues (Advanced Higher)	16 SCQF credit points
Modern Studies: Practical Research (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.

Course structure and conditions of award

Course structure

This Course develops a range of cognitive skills. It encourages active learning in the process of developing an understanding of contemporary society. Learners need to acquire and apply relevant knowledge and develop their understanding of concepts, theories, principles and terminology. By using a variety of sources of information, they will develop evaluating, analysing, synthesising and research/investigating skills in order to understand and explain contemporary issues.

The Modern Studies Course has two mandatory Units. Within each Unit there is a considerable degree of flexibility in themes/topics that can be studied to allow personalisation and choice.

By undertaking this Course, learners will develop a wide range of important and transferable skills, including: researching, understanding and using a wide range of evidence on contemporary issues; evaluating, analysing and synthesising evidence, making and justifying decisions, and drawing conclusions with justification; constructing arguments in a balanced and structured way; communicating, by a variety of means, views, opinions, decisions and conclusions based on evidence; and applying knowledge and understanding about a range contemporary political or social issues and being able to adopt a comparative approach.

The skills listed above will be developed and applied over a range of political or social contexts in the following Units. The *Modern Studies: Practical Research* Unit offers opportunities for the development of higher order skills.

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

Modern Studies: Political or Social Issues (Advanced Higher)

In this Unit, the learner will study one of two contexts: Political Issues and Research Methods or Social Issues and Research Methods. Regardless of which context is chosen for study, an international comparative approach to the study should be taken. Learners should examine case studies related to the context studied to critically evaluate a range of political and/or social science research methods.

Modern Studies: Practical Research (Advanced Higher)

In this Unit, the learner will develop a range of independent research skills in the context of a theme/topic/issue studied in the *Modern Studies: Political or Social Issues* Unit. The learner will develop the investigative skills of planning, researching, collecting information, selecting evidence, analysing, synthesising and presenting effectively.

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.

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Assessment

Information about assessment standards 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 Unit specifications.

They can be assessed on a Unit-by-Unit basis or by combined assessment.

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

Exemplification of possible assessment approaches for these Units is provided in the *National Assessment Resource*.

Course assessment

Courses from National 4 to Advanced Higher include assessment of [added value](#)¹. 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 learned during the Course. This will be assessed by a combination of a [question paper](#)² and a [project](#)³. The question paper will require demonstration of knowledge, understanding and skills accumulated 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.

¹ Definitions can be found here: www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/45528.html

² See link above for definition.

³ See link above for definition.