



Higher Modern Studies — draft Course rationale and summary

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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

The Modern Studies Course builds upon the principles and practices for the social studies curriculum area¹.

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

Modern Studies develops in learners a greater 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.

For example, 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 become responsible citizens by building up a framework of social, political and economic knowledge and understanding.

The investigative and critical thinking activities in this Course give learners important experience in contributing to group work and also working on their own. Learners will acquire attributes which will be important for their life and work.

Through the skills and content of the Course, learners will develop an increased understanding of the democratic political system and their place in it and a sense of responsible citizenship. Through its focus on social and economic understanding, learners will develop skills in employability and enterprise. The emphasis on the evaluation of sources and decision making will develop thinking skills. Learners will also progressively develop skills in literacy through the development of report writing skills and numeracy through the evaluation of numerical and graphical information; and they will be encouraged to reflect upon their own health and wellbeing.

¹ Social studies principles and practice paper

www.ltscotland.org.uk/learningteachingandassessment/curriculumareas/socialstudies/principlesandpractice/index.asp

Purpose and aims of the Course

Modern Studies opens up the world of contemporary society for learners.

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 social and political issues they will meet in their lives. This purpose will be achieved through successful study of the Course Units which focus on the democratic political system in the UK, social issues in the UK and international issues.

Through the Modern Studies Course, learners will undertake a coherent study of contemporary society with concepts and themes being revisited and built upon across Units. It will develop the skills to help learners interpret and participate in the social and political processes they will encounter now and in the future.

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:

- ◆ engage as active and informed members of society and local and global citizens
- ◆ appreciate the complexity, and changing nature, of modern society
- ◆ appreciate and respect human and legal rights and responsibilities as well as democratic modes of government
- ◆ understand the democratic process and how, why and to what extent people are informed about and participate in society
- ◆ understand social and economic issues at local, Scottish, national and international levels and ways of addressing needs and inequalities
- ◆ distinguish between different views about the extent of state involvement in society
- ◆ understand the nature and processes of conflict resolution at all levels

The 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. Learners will develop skills which are transferable to other areas of study and which they will use in everyday life.

Information about typical learners who might do the Course

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 learners 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 may be beneficial for learners to have the skills and knowledge required by one or more of the following:

- ◆ Modern Studies (National 5) or relevant component Units or another social subject
- ◆ equivalent qualifications

All Courses in this suite will take account of the needs of all learners and provide sufficient flexibility to enable learners to achieve in different ways and at a different pace.

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 information/evidence on contemporary issues; evaluating, analysing and synthesising information/evidence in order to detect and explain a lack of objectivity; make and justify decisions, and draw conclusions with justification; constructing arguments in a balanced and structured way; and communicating, by a variety of means, views, opinions, decisions and conclusions based on evidence.

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.

Higher Modern Studies provides an access qualification for study in further and higher education and for entry into a diverse range of occupations and careers.

Course summary

Course title: Higher Modern Studies

SCQF level 6 (24 SCQF credit points)

Course outline

Mandatory Units

Democracy in Scotland and the United Kingdom (Higher) (6 SCQF credit points)

Social Issues in the United Kingdom (Higher) (6 SCQF credit points)

International Issues (Higher) (6 SCQF credit points)

Course assessment

(6 SCQF credit points)

This Course includes six SCQF credit points for 40 additional programmed hours to allow 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

The 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. By using a variety of sources of information, they will develop evaluating, analysing and investigating skills in order to understand and explain political and social issues.

The Modern Studies Course consists of three mandatory Units. Within each Unit there is a considerable degree of flexibility in themes which 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 information/evidence on contemporary issues; evaluating, analysing and synthesising information/evidence in order to detect and explain a lack of objectivity, making and justifying decisions, and drawing conclusions with justification; constructing arguments in a balanced and structured way and communicating, by a variety of means, views, opinions, decisions and conclusions based on evidence.

The skills listed above will be developed and applied over a range of political, social and international contexts in the following Units. Each Unit also offers opportunities for learners to focus on particular skills.

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

Democracy in Scotland and the United Kingdom (Higher)

In this Unit, the focus will be on using sources of information about contemporary political issues in order to detect and explain a lack of objectivity. Learners will develop knowledge and understanding of democracy in Scotland and the United Kingdom and will have the opportunity to focus on key aspects of the political system in Scotland or the UK including: political institutions and processes; voting systems; voting behaviour; and the ways in which citizens are informed about, participate in, and influence the political process.

Social Issues in the United Kingdom (Higher)

In this Unit, the focus will be on using sources of information about contemporary social issues in order to make and justify decisions. Learners will develop knowledge and understanding of social issues in the United Kingdom and will have the opportunity to focus on key aspects of society in Scotland and the UK drawn from social inequalities or crime and the law.

International Issues (Higher)

In this Unit the focus will be on using sources of information and evidence on contemporary international issues in order to draw and justify conclusions. Learners will develop knowledge and understanding of international issues and will have the opportunity to focus on political and social/economic issues in a major world power or a significant international issue.

successful learner, confident individual, responsible citizen, effective contributor

To gain the award of the Course, the learner must pass all 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 will be included in the *Course Assessment Specification* which will provide 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 will be assessed pass/fail 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 will be provided in the *National Assessment Resource*.

Course assessment

Courses from National 4 to Advanced Higher include assessment of [added value](#)². 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 Higher Modern Studies Course, added value will focus on:

- ◆ breadth
- ◆ challenge
- ◆ application

The learner will draw on, extend and apply the knowledge and skills they have learned during the Course. This will be assessed through a combination of a [question paper](#)³ and an [assignment](#)⁴. The question paper will require demonstration of a breadth of knowledge, understanding and skills accumulated from across the Course. The assignment will require learners to extend and apply their knowledge and skills and will be sufficiently open and flexible to allow for personalisation and choice.

² Definitions can be found here: www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/45528.html

³ See link above for definition.

⁴ See link above for definition.