



## Advanced Higher Modern Studies

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## Draft National Course Specification

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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:** Advanced Higher Modern Studies

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

**Course code:** to be advised

### Mandatory Units

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

**Researching Modern Studies (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:

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

### Progression

This Course or its Units may provide progression to:

- ◆ degree courses in social subjects and social science or related areas
- ◆ HNCs in social subjects and social science 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 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 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 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.

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 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 encounter 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 context 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' independence of learning and their ability to work on their own initiative with supervision as appropriate.

Writing skills will be enhanced and developed through writing extended essays and a 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.

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 multi-disciplinary approach.

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 by carrying out research into a Modern Studies issue
- ◆ present complex ideas in a range of ways
- ◆ 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.

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 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.

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.

Important skills for learning, life and work are developed through the successful completion of this Course. These skills include: the ability to carry out independent research; 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 of 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 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.

This 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: the ability to carry out independent research; 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 of 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 *Researching Modern Studies* 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: Contemporary Issues (Advanced Higher)**

In this Unit, learners will study one of two contexts: Political Issues and Research Methods **or** Social Issues and Research Methods. Whether the Political Issues or Social Issues 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.

#### **Researching Modern Studies (Advanced Higher)**

In this Unit, learners will develop a range of investigating skills while undertaking independent research. Learners will develop a range of skills such as scoping or identifying appropriate research topics; how to plan and manage a complex programme of research; techniques to source, collect and record appropriate and reliable information; techniques to present findings using appropriate academic conventions; and how to evaluate research methodology.

### 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:

- ◆ developing and applying skills, knowledge and understanding in complex political or social contexts from the United Kingdom and making international comparisons
- ◆ evaluating, analysing and synthesising a wide range of evidence
- ◆ critically evaluating a range of political and/or social science research methods
- ◆ carrying out independent research on a complex political or social issue
- ◆ presenting complex ideas in a range of ways
- ◆ developing and applying factual and theoretical knowledge and understanding, giving detailed explanations and analysis of complex political or social issues
- ◆ adopting an international comparative approach

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 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 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:

- ◆ evaluating, analysing and synthesising a wide range of evidence to demonstrate complex skills related to political issues or social issues
- ◆ describing, explaining and analysing in order to demonstrate factual and theoretical knowledge and understanding of complex political or social issues in the United Kingdom and ability to make international comparisons
- ◆ critically evaluating a range of political and/or social science research methods

#### **Researching Modern Studies (Advanced Higher)**

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

- ◆ the ability to carry out independent research on complex political or social issues

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](#)<sup>1</sup>. 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

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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)

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>2</sup>. The [question paper](#)<sup>3</sup> 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.

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<sup>2</sup> Definitions can be found here: [www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/45528.html](http://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/45528.html)

<sup>3</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 Support Notes*.

## Administrative information

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**Published:** May 2012 (version 1.0)

**Superclass:** to be advised

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### History of changes to National Course Specification

Course details	Version	Description of change	Authorised by	Date

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Note: You are advised to check SQA's website ([www.sqa.org.uk](http://www.sqa.org.uk)) to ensure you are using the most up-to-date version of the Course Specification.