



National  
Qualifications

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# Modern Studies

## Assignment

### General assessment information

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This pack contains general assessment information for centres preparing candidates for the assignment Component of Higher Modern Studies Course assessment.

It must be read in conjunction with the specific assessment task(s) for this component of Course assessment, which may only be downloaded from SQA's designated secure website by authorised personnel.

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# Introduction

This is the general assessment information for the Higher Modern Studies assignment.

This assignment is worth 30 marks out of a total of 90 marks. This is 33% of the overall marks for the Course assessment. The Course will be graded A-D.

Marks for all Course Components are added up to give a total Course assessment mark which is then used as the basis for grading decisions.

This is one of two Components of Course assessment. The other Component is a question paper.

This document describes the general requirements for the assessment of the assignment Component of this Course. It gives general information and instructions for assessors.

It must be read in conjunction with the assessment task for this Component of Course assessment.

## Equality and inclusion

This Course assessment has been designed to ensure that there are no unnecessary barriers to assessment. Assessments have been designed to promote equal opportunities while maintaining the integrity of the qualification.

For guidance on assessment arrangements for disabled candidates and/or those with additional support needs, please follow the link to the Assessment Arrangements web page: [www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/14977.html](http://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/14977.html)

Guidance on inclusive approaches to delivery and assessment in this Course is provided in the *Course Support Notes*.

# What this assessment covers

This assessment contributes 33% of the total marks for the Course.

This assessment will assess the skills, knowledge and understanding specified for the assignment in the *Course Assessment Specification*. These are:

- ◆ Identify a modern studies issue about which there are alternative views.
- ◆ Research a modern studies issue using a range of sources of information.
- ◆ Analyse and synthesise information from a range of sources.
- ◆ Evaluate the usefulness and reliability of a range of sources of information.
- ◆ Reach a decision on the issue studied.
- ◆ Show detailed knowledge and understanding of the issue to support the decision reached.
- ◆ Show an awareness of alternatives to the decision.
- ◆ Communicate information using the conventions of a report.

# Assessment

## Purpose

The purpose of this assessment is to generate evidence for this Component of the Added Value of this Course by means of an assignment.

The purpose of this assignment is to demonstrate challenge and application by requiring the candidate to draw on and apply skills, knowledge and understanding within the context of a modern studies issue. This may be related to areas they have studied in class if they wish, but they are free to research any relevant contemporary issue.

## Assessment overview

This assessment has a research stage and a production of evidence stage.

Candidates should choose an area of study which allows them to analyse a complex contemporary issue and apply decision-making skills. They should research the issue, analyse, evaluate and synthesise information, show detailed knowledge and understanding of the issue, reach a decision while showing an awareness of alternatives, and communicate information using the conventions of a report. Candidates should use the specified resources (Research Evidence) collected during their research to support them in the production of evidence stage.

Assessors should provide reasonable guidance on the types of issue which will enable candidates to meet all the requirements of this assignment. They may also guide candidates as to the likely availability and accessibility of resources for their chosen issue.

Candidates should work on their research with minimum support from the assessor.

## Assessment conditions

Assessors must exercise their professional responsibility in ensuring that evidence submitted by a candidate is the candidate's own work.

This assignment has two stages:

- ◆ A research stage which will include: identifying an issue; collecting a range of evidence; analysing, evaluating and synthesising information from a range of sources; reaching a decision while showing an awareness of alternatives. This stage has been designed to be capable of completion over a notional period of eight hours, including preparation time for the production of evidence.
- ◆ A production of evidence stage which must be completed within one hour and 30 minutes.

Candidates should undertake the research stage at any appropriate point in the Course. This will normally be when they have developed the necessary skills, knowledge and understanding. Candidates should undertake the production of evidence stage in time to meet the submission date set by SQA.

During the research stage of this assessment, there are no restrictions on the resources to which candidates may have access.

During the final production of evidence stage of the assessment, candidates should only have access to the specified resources (Research Evidence) which will consist of material collected during the research stage of the assignment on up to two single-sided sheets of A4.

Candidates must undertake the production of evidence independently. However, reasonable assistance may be provided prior to the production of evidence taking place. The term 'reasonable assistance' is used to try to balance the need for support with the need to avoid giving too much assistance. If any candidates require more than what is deemed to be 'reasonable assistance', they may not be ready for assessment or it may be that they have been entered for the wrong level of qualification.

Reasonable assistance may be given on a generic basis to a class or group of candidates, eg advice on how to develop a project plan. It may also be given to candidates on an individual basis. When reasonable assistance is given on a one-to-one basis in the context of something the candidate has already produced or demonstrated, there is a danger that it becomes support for assessment and assessors need to be aware that this may be going beyond reasonable assistance.

In the research stage of this assignment reasonable assistance may include:

- ◆ directing candidates to the instructions for candidates
- ◆ clarifying instructions/requirements of the task
- ◆ advising candidates on the choice of issue
- ◆ advising candidates on possible sources of information
- ◆ arranging visits to enable gathering of evidence
- ◆ interim progress checks

In preparing for the production of evidence stage of this assignment, reasonable assistance may include:

- ◆ advising candidates of the nature and volume of specified resources which may be used to support the production of evidence

At any stage, reasonable assistance does not include:

- ◆ providing the issue for the candidate
- ◆ directing candidates to specific resources to be used
- ◆ providing model answers
- ◆ providing detailed feedback on drafts, including marking

The **research stage** will be conducted under some supervision and control. This means that although candidates may complete part of the work outwith the learning and teaching setting, assessors should put in place processes for monitoring progress and ensuring that the work is the candidate's own and that plagiarism has not taken place.

Assessors should put in place mechanisms to authenticate that the research is the candidate's own work, for example:

- ◆ interim progress meetings with candidates
- ◆ questioning
- ◆ candidate's record of activity/progress
- ◆ assessor observation

Groupwork approaches are acceptable as part of the research stage. However, there must be clear evidence for each candidate to show that the candidate has met the evidence requirements.

The **production of evidence stage** will be conducted under a high degree of supervision. This means that:

- ◆ candidates must be in direct sight of the assessor (or other responsible person) during the period of the assessment
- ◆ candidates must not communicate with each other
- ◆ candidates should only have access to the specified resources (Research Evidence)

## **Evidence to be gathered**

The following candidate evidence is required for this assessment:

- ◆ candidate assignment evidence produced under a high degree of supervision
- ◆ specified resources (Research Evidence) which are limited to two single-sided sheets of A4

# General marking instructions

In line with SQA's normal practice, the following general marking principles are addressed to the marker. They will also be helpful for those preparing learners for Course assessment.

The assessment task will be set and externally marked by SQA and conducted in centres under the conditions specified by SQA.

## General marking principles for Higher Modern Studies assignment

*This information is provided to help you understand the general principles that will be applied when marking candidate responses in this assignment. These principles must be read in conjunction with the detailed Marking Instructions which identify the key features required in candidate responses.*

- a) Marks for each candidate response must always be assigned in line with these general marking principles and the detailed Marking Instructions for this assignment.
- b) Principal Assessors will provide guidance on marking specific candidate responses which are not covered by either the principles or detailed Marking Instructions.
- c) Marking should always be positive. This means that, for each candidate response, marks are accumulated for the demonstration of relevant skills, knowledge and understanding: they are not deducted from a maximum on the basis of errors or omissions.
- d) The purpose of the Research Evidence is to help candidates in presenting the findings of their research and applying their skills, knowledge and understanding. The Research Evidence should be no more than two single sides of A4.

The Research Evidence will not be marked. However, it may assist in the marking of the assignment by enabling clarification of points which the candidate has made in the presentation of their evidence, and may allow markers to gain an insight into what the candidate intended.

Candidates can structure their assignment evidence in a variety of ways.

Candidates may demonstrate their skills, knowledge and understanding in a variety of ways and at different points in their assignment evidence. Markers should credit relevant and appropriate skills, knowledge and understanding wherever they are demonstrated.

In presenting their findings, candidates should show the following skills, knowledge and understanding:

- A. Identifying and demonstrating knowledge and understanding of the issue about which a decision is to be made, including alternative courses of action**  
Candidates can be credited in a number of ways up to a maximum of 10 marks.
- B. Analysing and synthesising information from a range of sources including use of specified resources**  
Candidates can be credited in a number of ways up to a maximum of 10 marks.
- C. Evaluating the usefulness and reliability of a range of sources of information**  
Candidates can be credited in a number of ways up to a maximum of 2 marks.
- D. Communicating information using the conventions of a report**  
Candidates can be credited in a number of ways up to a maximum of 4 marks.
- E. Reaching a decision, supported by evidence, about the issue**  
Candidates can be credited in a number of ways up to a maximum of 4 marks.

#### **Specified resources to be taken into assessment**

Candidates may take Research Evidence collected during the research phase into the production of evidence stage.

This evidence must consist of no more than two single-sided sheets of A4. Candidates should be encouraged to briefly annotate or highlight information on their resources before the production of evidence stage.

This Research Evidence must be submitted to SQA along with the candidate evidence produced during the final production of evidence stage.

The nature of the resources taken into the production of evidence stage may include, for example: evidence/data from primary or secondary research; bullet points/headings; mind maps; statistical, graphical or numerical data; survey results; interview questions and/or answers; questionnaire and/or results; list of internet search engine results; newspaper article or extracts; summary notes taken from a visit or talk; summary notes taken from a written or audio-visual source.

# Administrative information

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## History of changes

Version	Description of change	Authorised by	Date
1.1	General marking principles revised to provide guidance and clarification on the requirements of Research Evidence for the assignment.	Qualifications Manager	September 2014

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