

Improving Performance in Higher Modern Studies

Advice on Preparing Candidates for Social Issues in the UK

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Part One Introduction

The focus of this paper is to suggest a practicable way of delivering Social Issues. It also aims to suggest some good practice in Social Issues in both Paper One and Paper Two of Higher Modern Studies.

Much of the good practice contained in A Curriculum for Excellence (ACfE) and in SQA Guidance on learning and teaching will already be familiar to Modern Studies teachers.

Good teaching leads to good learning. Pupils who take responsibility for their learning have a much better chance of success. Likewise, quality teacher feedback and support for pupil performance will bring dividends.

The Higher Modern Studies Unit *Social Issues in the UK* is a challenging and fascinating part of the Course. It examines many of the key social issues of our times:

- What class divisions are there in our society and how have they changed in recent years?
- To what extent can the welfare state, created in the post world war two period, meet the challenges of the 21st century?
- What social and economic inequalities are there based on gender and race?
- To what extent is it the role of government or the individual to tackle these inequalities?

These are key issues for government at local, national and UK level. They are challenges our young people need to be made aware of as grow up in a society very different to that of Beveridge's day. Modern Studies teachers are highly motivated to teach these issues.

As always in Modern Studies, there are "on going issues and proposals for change". Governments come and go. New policies and controversies appear, which teachers, quite properly, seek to bring to the attention of their classes, some of which impact on the best laid plans.

There is considerable overlap between HMiE recommendations of A Curriculum for Excellence for Modern Studies and SQA teaching guidelines for Higher Modern Studies. These overlaps are made explicit in Appendix 1.

Social Issues in the UK can be taught in a creative way, which develops the capacities of A Curriculum for Excellence (ACfE), and which also properly prepares pupils for SQA internal and external assessment.

There are a wide range of resources available to teach this unit. The task is to manage these resources and opportunities into creating courses which are deliverable.

Part Two Outline of Suggested Delivery Plan

Methodology

The Big Picture in Social Issues - *Inequalities in UK society and how to respond to these inequalities* permeates all teaching and learning in this Unit.

There can be no definitive way to deliver any Modern Studies unit. Different departments have different resources. Modern Studies teachers are creative. In addition, teachers discover, as reflective professionals, new and better ways of teaching through the process itself. This guide is simply one approach to the delivery of Social Issues. Modern Studies teachers, working together, can share good practice and resources. If this guide is a starting point to these discussions and/or makes the job of teaching Social Issues more manageable, effective and enjoyable, it will have achieved its aims.

Timing

40 hours are allowed for the delivery of Social Issues where it is taught as a free-standing Unit. This plan therefore covers in 40 hours the delivery of the content of the Unit, and preparation for the assessment of it, i.e. the report on a Decision Making Exercise. Most centres, however, will deliver Social Issues as part of a Course in Higher Modern Studies. As such, the use of some the additional 40 hours for aspects such as induction into essay writing skills, reflection on feedback from essays, and handling evaluating questions is recommended to assist in Assessment For Learning (AiFL) activities. Use of home study and/or Supported Study is highly recommended.

Introduction	Share Teaching Plan and Learning Outcomes with pupils
Section 1	Inequalities in Society. What are they?
Time: 10 hours, plus home study	
Social Class	
Gender	
Race	
Focus: What effect do the above have on a person's wealth and health? Balanced analysis. Reasons? Examples?	
Section 2(a)	Whose responsibility is it to tackle these inequalities?
Time: 5 hours, plus home study	
Government (the Collectivist view)	
The Individual (the Individualist view)	
Other approaches eg. the "Third Way" approach of New Labour (collective security but individual rights and responsibilities)	
Focus: To what extent is the individual or government responsible for wealth and health? Balanced analysis. Reasons? Examples?	

Section 2 (b) How effective have national and local strategies been in tackling health and wealth inequalities?

Time: 15 hours, plus home study

Focus: Which strategies are working and which are not? Balanced analysis. Reasons? Examples?

Section 3 The Decision Making Exercise

Time 10 hours, plus home study

Balanced yet decisive and critical evaluation of source materials
Background knowledge permeates report writing

Focus: How to make an informed decision on a given social issue in the light of available knowledge and statistical evidence.

Use of the Additional 40 hours

Time: 10 hours (not necessarily in one “chunk”), plus home study

This time can be used in a number of ways:

1. Good practice in the Decision Making Exercise (Paper Two – plus the skills of tackling evaluating questions
2. Good practice in Paper One: Essay writing skills

When teaching good technique and providing quality feedback, please refer to Examples of Good Practice, contained in Parts 4 and 5.

Such use of the 10 hours is italicised.

Part Three Expanded Teaching Plan

Areas where some of the additional time for the Course has been used are italicised.

Section 1 Inequalities in Society. What are they?

Time: 10 hours, plus home study

Introduction: Share Teaching Plan and Learning Outcomes with pupils; explaining the success criteria to pupils

Focus: Teach pupils the “big picture”

Social Class (Background)

Gender

Race

ACfE. What are the divisions in society today? Pupils work in groups. Pupils design and present an explanation of the divisions, giving examples.

Content checklist:

- Modern definitions of social class (Background)
- Social class and health inequalities, case study approach
- Social class and wealth inequalities; income, employment, housing, life chances
- Gender and the glass ceiling
- Gender and health inequalities
- Race and wealth inequalities
- Institutional and overt racism

Focus: What effects do the above have on a person’s wealth and health? Balanced analysis. Reasons? Examples?

ACfE: Pupils access websites related to social class/gender/race inequalities. Pupils work in groups to make power point presentations showing the effect social class/gender/race inequalities have on a person’s wealth & health.

ACfE: Pupils write extended essay on above, using SQA specimen paper and exemplars from Understanding Standards.

Section 2 a) Whose responsibility is it to tackle these inequalities?

Time: 5 hours, plus home study

Government (the Collectivist view)

The Individual (the Individualist view)

Other approaches eg. the “Third Way” approach of New Labour (collective security but individual rights and responsibilities)

Section 2 b) How effective have national and local strategies been in tackling health and wealth inequalities?

Time: 15 hours, plus home study

Content Checklist

- The Collectivist principles of Beveridge's welfare state
- The 5 giant evils; poverty, unemployment, lack of health care, ignorance, poor housing
- The Individualist approach (private provision and responsibility)
- New Labour and the "Third way";
- Welfare to work
- Greater emphasis on means testing and tax credits
- Holistic approach(es) to wealth and health
- Collective support via Government but personal responsibility too
- Success, or otherwise, of equality legislation regarding gender and race

Focus: To what extent is the individual or government responsible for wealth and health? Balanced analysis. Reasons? Examples?

Focus: How effective have national and local strategies been in tackling wealth and health inequalities?

ACfE: Pupils invite outside speaker(s). E.g. MSP, representative of political party or pressure group. Pupils prepare questions, write up report on answers.

ACfE: Class debate. "New Labour has abandoned the principles of the welfare state".

ACfE: Pupils write extended essay on above, using SQA specimen paper and exemplars from the Modern Studies subject page. (This forms part of the extra 10 hours for the Course)

Section 3 The Decision Making Exercise

Time 10 hours, plus home study

The task is to write a balanced, yet decisive report using evidence from sources and general background knowledge.

ACfE: Pupils reflect on important decision in their life, e.g. choice of university and justify to class via power point.

Pupils need to consider – arguments for, arguments against, rebuttal and financial constraints on their choice. Use sources (e.g. university prospectus) and background information.

ACfE: pupils work in groups to gather information on controversial issue e.g. free school meals for all, from differing political viewpoints. Some groups for/some against. Which viewpoint has the best/most convincing evidence?

Answering evaluating questions. Detecting bias, exaggeration and manipulation of evidence.

ACfE: Pupils complete report of DME timed (to SQA specifications if possible) in class. Feedback given, using AiFL good practice.

Part Four Good Practice in Social Issues Paper One

Essay questions

The best advice on answering essay questions is found in 'Preparing Candidates for Essay Questions', posted on the Modern Studies subject page of the SQA website..

Exam questions will always be broad. They will always be set from the "*Descriptor*" set out in the National Unit Specification: statement of standards.

Some examples are:

SQA Specimen paper

To what extent is there a link between income and health? (15)

Critically examine the success of recent government measures to reduce gender inequalities. (15)

2007 SQA Higher Paper

To what extent are the founding principles of the Welfare State being met? (15)

To what extent does social and economic inequality continue to exist in the UK? (15)

Remember, pupils have a choice of question in this Study Theme

The challenge for students is to answer the question set. They should not deliver a pre-prepared answer regardless of the question ("turning the question").

Analytical answers, which consider different viewpoints, gain much higher marks than descriptive answers.

Students should be taught to use phrases such as "however", "to some extent", "one the one hand this may be true, but on the other..."

This forces students to analyse and provide balanced responses.

Students should also try to use the words contained in the question in their answers. This approach makes it more likely the answers will be relevant.

For example, in answering, "To what extent do social and economic inequalities continue to exist in the UK? Students may answer giving examples of class, gender and/or race.

Part of a good answer may be along the lines of

“There are **large inequalities** in health across the UK, which **reflect social class**. **For example**, Easterhouse in the east end of Glasgow, which is a poor area has the highest rates of smoking in the whole of the UK. By contrast, the healthiest parts of the UK, in the south of England, have the lowest rates of smoking.

However, the Scottish Executive have now banned smoking in public places and offered additional help for people living in deprived areas to stop smoking. Not everyone who is poor smokes and at the end of the day, individuals need to take some responsibility for their health”

The words in bold highlight where this particular student has offered a balanced response, with analysis and exemplification which answers part of this question.

There are examples of Paper One good practice on the Exemplification section of the Modern Studies subject page on the SQA website. Use of these in class or for homework is highly recommended.

Centres may wish to give candidates further practice in answering essay questions in preparation for sitting the Course assessment. Examples of such essay titles, along with the part of the descriptor from which they are drawn, are:

To what extent do inequalities in wealth and health continue to exist in the UK? (15)

(Evidence of inequalities in wealth and health; the extent of inequalities in wealth and health, with reference to ethnicity and gender))

To what extent is there a link between lifestyle and social inequalities? (15)

(Causes of inequalities in wealth and health)

Critically assess the view that the consequences of social and economic inequalities fall most heavily on the young. (15)

(Consequences of inequalities in wealth and health)

Critically examine the success of recent government measures to reduce social and economic inequalities. (15)

(The nature and extent of government measures to deal with these inequalities)

Critically assess the view that recent government measures to deal with social and economic inequalities have abandoned the collectivist principle of the Welfare State.

(The third strand of the descriptor)

In each case the best answers will feature exemplification from the traditional ‘wealth’ and ‘health’ aspects of the Unit. This is part of the balance that is expected in an answer and is essential if the answer is to reach the upper end of the marks range.

Part Five Good Practice in Paper Two

Evaluating Questions

The short evaluating questions are straightforward and serve two purposes:

1. To introduce candidates to the content of the sources
2. To enable candidates to contrast the views in the written sources as a first step towards forming a decision.

Answers to these questions should be short, straight to the point and contain no background knowledge.

Questions are always set in such a way as to point students to the statistical source first, to assist with locating the appropriate passages in text sources.

The Decision Making Exercise (DME)

Students are asked to write a report, based on the text and statistical sources provided. Students are also asked to include relevant background knowledge. Remember that background knowledge is general information eg about the original aims/principles of the Welfare State. Students do not need specific background knowledge of the task they are set.

The inclusion of relevant background knowledge is essential for a response to pass. This can be done in one of two ways:

1. Using freestanding background knowledge: Background Knowledge should comprise facts which are in the public domain, such as Government policy, Opposition criticism or controversies which have been in the media. Localised background is perfectly acceptable, so long as it is in the public domain and is relevant to the task
2. Developing points from the sources: In writing DMEs, the setting team includes “coathanger” phrases. For example, mention may be made of issues such as “collective principles” or “Labour’s social policies”. It is hoped that candidates may pick up these coathangers and develop them with their knowledge of social issues.

Background information must be relevant to the DME task. Information which is inserted randomly without any linkage to arguments or to the task is not creditworthy.

Background knowledge should permeate the DME as much as possible. It is not recommended that students write a pre-prepared aspect of background knowledge at the start, regardless of the DME task.

It is important that students write a balanced, yet decisive report.

Comment must be made on opposing views. It is good practice to include a “rebuttal” section, where opposing views are challenged. This helps students write a decisive report as well as a balanced one.

Students should use all the statistical sources provided. It is good practice, although not essential, to annotate use of all sources at the side of the page. Some students devise imaginative chapter headings for their reports. So long as these are relevant to the task, this is perfectly acceptable.

It is important that the report format is adhered to. A long essay will not suffice. Yet, there is more than one way to write a good report.

It is good practice would be to include in all DMEs:

- Recommendation
- Reasons for Recommendation
- Opposing arguments
- Rebuttal of Opposing Arguments
- Summing up

Within these headings, there should be a synthesis of the sources provided. Background knowledge should permeate.

It is good practice to use inverted commas where use is made of the text sources. The ability to write in the third person displays skills of objectivity which are relevant to the DME task.

There are examples of Paper Two good practice on the [Exemplification](#) section of the Modern Studies subject page on the SQA website. Use of these in class or for homework is highly recommended.

Part 6

Concluding remarks, further reading and CPD:

Teaching Social Issues in the UK will always be a challenging. The pace of change in modern society and a 24/7 news media means that there are now many more issues available for teachers to discuss with pupils in their teaching. Greater choice however has its challenges. Time management and curricular planning are key issues.

SQA and ACfE believe in the value of creative, collaborative teaching strategies which prepare pupils for life long learning and the real challenges of modern society.

Modern Studies is and always has been a dynamic subject. “Coverage” of the syllabus, as set out in National Unit Specification: statement of standards, has been designed to assist teachers.

Examination questions are broad. They will always be set from the “*Descriptor*” set out in the National Unit Specification: statement of standards.

SQA would expect answers to these broad questions from the Coverage section. This should not be regarded as a static checklist. There are always in Modern Studies “on going issues and proposals for change” which will be as valid as those set out in the Coverage.

Further Reading

SQA: Higher Modern Studies Course Specification (the Arrangements)

SQA: Higher Modern Studies Principal Assessor’s Report for 2007

SQA: Understanding Standards: This section of the website contains sample candidate answers and marking exercises, with feedback to markers, based on them.

HMIE: Modern Studies – A portrait of current practice in Scottish secondary schools

CPD

SQA Understanding Standards Professional Development Workshop Glasgow 17 November 2007

The aims of the Professional Development workshop were to:

- Inform delegates of the issues affecting performance of candidates in the 2007 examination
- Consider points for action which may help delegates improve the performance of candidates
- Provide opportunity for delegates to focus on the points of action, to identify existing best practice and to clarify issues

The course materials can be bought from the SQA Customer Contact Centre (0845 279 1000).

Appendix 1

A Curriculum for Excellence and achievement in exams

There is a great deal of consensus between SQA and HMiE in the teaching of Higher Modern Studies.

Modern Studies teachers can feel confident in that in the teaching of Modern Studies, as set out in the SQA National Course Specification, the capacities of A Curriculum for Excellence are being addressed.

Several of the parallels in emphasis can be see below

SQA National Course Specification Higher Modern Studies

Modern Studies aims to support and develop the skills of teachers and the self-discipline of pupils and to enhance classroom and school environments so they are conducive to learning and teaching. Innovative practice, which restores the control of learners and teachers over their educational environments, is promoted.

Consequently, direct experience of pedagogies which stimulate an appetite for *participation, consultation*, and the assumption of *responsibility* are endorsed.

It is recommended that young people plan, transact and evaluate active and *participative* schemes of work and methodologies that help them to acquire a reflective global perspective. Accordingly, there is a clear emphasis on developing a group of *skills, values and attitudes* rather than simply on the learning of factual content as an end in itself.

In conclusion, the Modern Studies student has opportunities to develop *broad, transferable core skills* that people need in order to be full, active and responsible members of society and who have the *capability of working with others*.

Courses help develop *communication skills* which are essential in clarifying thought, in interacting and conversing with others, in expressing thoughts and in conveying information, feelings and opinions. *Information Technology is used to collect, organise, analyse, present and communicate information*.

Modern Studies provides opportunities for young people to cope with the *numerical demands of everyday life*, becoming comfortable with numbers, and with graphs, symbols, diagrams and calculators.

The Modern Studies student is also able to *tackle issues and problems in personal, social, political, economic and environmental contexts*, informed by prior experience, personal and social values consistent with a democratic society, anti-discrimination and the critical application of technology.

In summary, Modern Studies equips young people to be, in the words of *A Curriculum for Excellence* (2004), ‘successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors’.

HMiE- Modern Studies – A portrait of Current Practice in Scottish Secondary Schools

Concluding comments:

Teaching for effective learning in Modern Studies has many strengths. To build further on these strengths, in addition to the issues raised throughout this portrait, consideration should be given to the following key questions.

Are the learning experiences for learners imaginative, creative, stimulating and challenging?

Do we promote independent learning using ICT and relevant interactive social scientific sources?

Do we build learners' confidence by sharing the purposes of lessons and discussing with them key ideas which underpin the subject?

Do we give learners enough practical opportunities to develop the aspects of citizenship which we teach in the subject?

SQA Guidance on learning and Teaching Approaches for Higher Modern Studies

HMiE's suggested learning experiences are mirrored in SQA Guidance and Learning approaches for Higher Modern Studies. Passages have been italicised for emphasis:

The following learning experiences are essential to the Course and the additional 40 hours allowed in the Course can be used to develop the appropriate learning and teaching strategies.

A wide variety of resources available

Knowledge and skills enrichment through exposure to a *wide range of resources*, commercial products, official statistics, newspapers, current affairs magazines, videos and television and radio programmes.

Among the major sources from the mass media are schools programmes and documentary/current affairs programmes. A wide range of views on current issues can be examined through extracts from the range of newspapers as well as articles from the major weekly news magazines.

Many newspapers are also published in electronic form on the internet. The media inform and shape our understanding of the processes and issues central to the Course and this should *underpin use of these resources*.

Focus on extended writing and evaluating skills

Learning and teaching approaches in Higher Modern Studies rely heavily on these sources for *group work, oral discussion and debate*, the *detailed assessment of case studies* and examples, more extended essays and report writing based on evaluating skills.

Candidates should also be encouraged to reflect on their own experience. Given the model of assessment at Higher, it will be important throughout the Course for candidates to progress to more complex tasks of *extended writing and data handling* in order to develop their skills beyond the levels attained at Intermediate 2 or Credit level Standard Grade.

Opportunities should be built into the Course at an early stage to teach the skills of extended essay writing. *This would be a valid use for some of the additional 40 hours' time*. Similarly, candidates should be taught the data-handling and report-writing skills required for Higher at an appropriate point within the Course.

The process of report writing may be built up progressively from mini-reports based on a limited number of sources to full-scale decision making exercises.

Class discussion and debate

Candidates should be encouraged to discuss issues with each other and with teaching staff and to make oral presentations of their views. There should be *opportunities to engage in discussion and debate* through interaction between staff and candidates in the forum of debate.

Candidates should be encouraged to prepare and debate key issues within the Course.

Assessment as part of teaching and learning

As candidates progress through the Course, they should be encouraged through *assessment activities and homework tasks to develop higher-order extended writing skills*, for example in discussion/analysis essays.

Progress in evaluative and investigative skills can be shown by synthesising complex sources in decision making tasks based on exercises similar to the final Course assessment.

Candidates should be given opportunities to take *individual responsibility for learning within a supportive environment*. They should be provided with Course handouts indicating the timescale for the Course and key assessment points.

They should also be given *Unit handouts indicating the content to be covered, the sequence of topics, homework, assessment points and resources required*.

Reading will form an important part of the Modern Studies Course at Higher. Candidates should be encouraged to *read and make notes from relevant textbooks as part of their coursework*.

It would be appropriate to spend some of the additional 40 hours' time on skills such as note taking and speed reading. Candidates should also be directed towards appropriate background reading, including political biographies and relevant fictional works. Liaising with other subject areas will often be helpful.

Effective learning and teaching in Modern Studies will involve a range of learning and teaching situations. Teachers and lecturers are best able to match the requirements of the Course to the capabilities of their candidates and to *devise methods of organisation that meet the needs of individual candidates*.

Appendix 2

Resources

SQA does not endorse any commercial publisher's resources. It is up to the professional judgement of teachers themselves to assess the quality and appropriateness of resources available.

There are now a wide variety of resources available for teaching Social Issues in the UK.

Textbooks

Commercial publishers have published textbooks on Social Issues in the UK and on exam good practice.

Online

There are numerous websites which have resources which can be used to support the teaching of Social Issues in the UK.;

www.sqa.org.uk

The Report of the Principal Assessor for Higher Modern Studies for 2007 is enables teachers and pupils to access good practices to adopt (as well as approaches to be avoided) for success in the external examination.

<http://www.ltscotland.org.uk/assess/>

LT Scotland have support materials for the teaching of Social Issues. These are:

Modern Studies: Social Issues – Health and Wealth Inequalities in the UK (Support notes for teachers and students for implementation in 2006. The pack covers class structure, health, wealth, health care, social welfare and policies to deal with inequalities.)

Modern Studies: Social Issues in the UK - The Decision Making Exercise (Comprehensive package including student materials)

<http://www.hmie.gov.uk/>

<http://www.curriculumforexcellencescotland.gov.uk/>

www.understandingstandards.co.uk

Exemplar essays and marking responses are available to assist pupils in raising attainment

Video

BBC Scotland has produced television programmes specifically for Social Issues in the UK.