

5 February 2013

To: SQA Co-ordinators  
(Secondary Schools and Colleges of Further Education)  
Directors of Education  
SCIS

Action by Recipient
Response required
✓ Note and pass on
None — update/information only

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Dear Colleague

### **National Qualifications Update — Modern Studies**

The contents of this letter should be passed to the members of staff responsible for Modern Studies.

#### **SQA Website**

This is the main source of information on National Qualifications in Modern Studies. It contains the current and past External and Internal Assessment reports, Course Specifications/Arrangements documents (including Access 3 Social Subjects) and Specimen Papers, previous National Qualifications Updates and marking instructions for recent diets. The address of the website is [www.sqa.org.uk](http://www.sqa.org.uk). On the homepage, enter 'Modern Studies' on the 'Subject and Qualification Finder'. Thereafter select from a choice of levels within Modern Studies.

#### **Update on the 2012 diet**

Principal Assessors and their examining teams are warmly thanked for their efforts in delivering a successful diet. The External Assessment Reports are on our website and are invaluable sources of advice and good practice. Some points to highlight for each level are:

##### *Advanced Higher*

Candidate numbers presented for Advanced Higher remained stable at just under 800. The mean mark in the examination was 54.4 – a slight decrease from 2011 (54.7). The mean dissertation mark (29.4) was down slightly on the previous year (29.5).

It was noted by markers that there was an increase in numbers of candidates who had produced high quality dissertations. In order to help maintain the high standard, centres are advised to continue to use the materials on the Understanding Standards website and the information within the Improving Performance report.

Centres are reminded that Political and Social Sciences NABs pre-dating the current versions (October 2008) are no longer valid.

Flyleafs and notes for the submission of candidates' Dissertations are available only on the secure part of the SQA website via SQA Co-ordinators. Where centres wish confirmation of the validity of titles not on this list, proposals must be submitted to the Scottish Qualifications Authority via the Dissertation mail-box ([dissertation@sqa.org.uk](mailto:dissertation@sqa.org.uk)).

The uplift date for candidate submissions of the Advanced Higher Dissertation is 23 April 2013.

### *Higher*

Entries increased from 7,763 in 2011 to 8,184 in 2012. Candidate performance was notably better than recent years and this is reflected in the A-C pass rate increasing from 76.7% in 2011 to 81.8% in 2012.

Markers noted that there was an increase in the number of candidate responses which demonstrated both a depth of understanding and quality of exemplification.

Centres should continue to make use of the Higher Modern Studies support available on SQA's website.

### *Intermediate*

For Intermediate 1 entries remained stable at just over 1,000 and for Intermediate 2, entries decreased slightly from 3,427 in 2011 to 3,334 in 2012. In Intermediate 1 the A-C pass rate fell slightly by 0.5% while at Intermediate 2 it increased by 6.3%.

Marker reports indicated that as in Higher candidates' responses, there was a good use of contemporary exemplification in Intermediate candidates' responses.

Centres are reminded that a document containing advice on Improving Performance in Intermediate 2 Modern Studies is available on the SQA website - [www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/files/ImprovingPerformanceatIntermediate2.pdf](http://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/files/ImprovingPerformanceatIntermediate2.pdf)

### *Standard Grade*

Entries decreased slightly from 13,337 in 2011 to 13,216 in 2012 and the 1-6 pass rate remained more or less the same as in 2011. Candidates gaining a Credit award increased from 44.6% to 46.1%.

It was noted that Enquiry Skills responses were good where candidates had demonstrated linkage between evidence and a specific point of view.

Centres are reminded to continue to advise candidates to use contemporary exemplification in their responses.

The most recent style of 'Selective in the Use of Facts' question will continue. Centres should re-emphasise to candidates that they are looking to prove each sentence in the view either correct or incorrect. They are not expected to look for selectivity within a statement. Centres must also ensure that candidates are aware that there are degrees of selectivity going from zero to 100%. In other words, statements within the view can be: all incorrect; or two incorrect and one correct; or one incorrect and two correct; or all correct.

## **Estimates and Appeals**

The updated *Estimates, Absentees and Assessment Appeals Guidance on Evidence Requirements* (Published: October 2012 (Revised), Publication code: BA5212) is available on SQA's website. This document provides guidance on evidence requirements for estimates, absentee consideration and appeals consideration and is for subject specialists in centres that are delivering National Courses.

Centres should note the advice given about raising cut-off scores where split prelims are used. Whilst SQA past paper questions may be used in Prelims, whole question papers or sections of question papers are not acceptable. In Modern Studies at Higher level this means that an unaltered Paper 2 would invalidate the evidence even if the Paper 1 was drawn from three or more sources. For the DME, the relevant NABs can be used and EV questions are provided to facilitate this.

At Advanced Higher Modern Studies centres should ensure that when using past paper questions from 2008 and before that they still meet the demands of the current arrangements. When providing candidate estimates, the overall estimate should include evidence from the dissertation. This should be based on the candidate's progress up to the date of the overall estimate.

For Standard Grade, centres may generate their own assessment. These should indicate the provenance of items. Where past SQA items are used, these should come from a minimum of three past papers.

Where commercial papers are bought in, it is the responsibility of the centre to ensure their validity. If necessary, questions and cut-off scores should be modified. Only the current year's commercial papers are deemed secure.

Centres are also reminded that Marking Instructions and sources of questions must be included with the evidence even when NABs or past SQA questions have been used.

Full guidance on the above is available via the SQA website.

All queries on appeals should be addressed to the Appeals Helpline at [appeals@sqa.org.uk](mailto:appeals@sqa.org.uk).

## **Verification**

Verification was carried out successfully last session and the Senior Verifier and Verifiers are thanked for all of their work. The Internal Assessment Report is available from the subject pages of the website. It gives clear and helpful advice on the verification process. When submitting evidence, centres should indicate clearly which NAB is being used. It is also helpful if centres/candidates date the evidence when it is produced. Centres should use the latest version of any NAB available at the time of assessment.

## **Markers**

SQA is again grateful to those who marked in the 2012 diet. It is generally recognised that marking for SQA provides excellent professional development, and can be a major factor in promoting improved performance in individual centres.

## **Becoming a Marker**

If you are interested in becoming a marker in Modern Studies, information and applications forms are available on the Appointee Management section of the SQA website. To become a Marker, we normally ask that you are in your third year of teaching the Course. We welcome applications throughout the year and, where a suitable vacancy exists, we may be able to offer

an appointment for this year. The experience of marking helps to increase the awareness of the demands of Course assessment and is proven to be excellent professional and personal development.

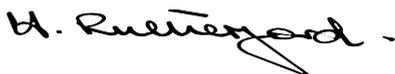
### **CfE Developments**

The developments for the new Modern Studies Courses are well underway. It is recommended that you keep up to date on the progress of the developments by visiting the dedicated webpages: <http://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/45629.html>. You are also encouraged to use the *Have Your Say* facility on SQA's website to record any comments or feedback that you may have on the development or related materials.

We are currently in the process of recruiting specialists to write and check items for the Specimen and Live Question Papers for Higher Modern Studies. If you are interested in becoming involved in the new Higher development, please get in touch with me.

If you wish further clarification on any of the above, please contact either Duncan Cox (0845 213 5498; [duncan.cox@sqa.org.uk](mailto:duncan.cox@sqa.org.uk)) or myself at the above address.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "H. Rutherford". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline.

Hilary Rutherford  
Qualifications Manager