

11 February 2014

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. On the homepage, enter 'Modern Studies' on the 'Subject and Qualification Finder'. Thereafter select from a choice of levels within Modern Studies, including the new CfE qualifications.

Update on the 2013 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

A total of 135 centres presented candidates for Advanced Higher Modern Studies in 2013 — an increase of 19 from 2012 and candidate numbers were just over 830 (799 in 2012).

The average score in the examination was 54.6 – a slight increase from 2012 (54.4). The mean dissertation mark (28.9) was down on the previous year (29.4).

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Centres are reminded that Political and Social Sciences NABs pre-dating the current versions (October 2008) are no longer valid.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

The uplift date for candidate submissions of the Advanced Higher Dissertation is 24 April 2014.

Higher

Entries decreased from 8,184 in 2012 to 8,027 in 2013. Candidate performance has remained strong and this is reflected in the A-C pass rate increasing from 81.8% in 2012 to 82.1% in 2013.

Feedback from examiners and markers suggested that most candidates had no difficulty accessing questions and that candidates 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 increased slightly from 1,037 in 2012 to 1,124 in 2013 and for Intermediate 2, entries also increased slightly from 3,334 in 2012 to 3,676 in 2013. In Intermediate 1 the A-C pass rate increased by 10.4% while at Intermediate 2 it fell slightly by 2.6%.

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

Standard Grade

For the final year of Standard Grade, entries decreased slightly from 13,216 in 2012 to 13,179 in 2013 and the 1-6 pass rate remained more or less the same as in 2012. Candidates gaining a Credit award increased from 46.1% to 47.1%.

SQA is grateful for all of the hard work that the Principal Assessor and Examining Team have undertaken to ensure that the national standard was upheld during the lifespan of the Standard Grades in Modern Studies. We also thank all markers who have carried out their duties so diligently in the marking of candidates' examination question papers for Standard Grade.

NQ Verification

NQ 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 2013 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.

Results Services: 2013-2014

In the academic year 2013-2014, SQA will introduce two new 'Results Services' to replace our existing Appeals Service.

These are:

Exceptional Circumstances Consideration Service:

This service will run prior to results being published. If a school or college believes that a candidate has suffered as a result of exceptional circumstances (for example bereavement or illness during an exam) staff can inform us of the circumstances and submit alternative evidence of attainment demonstrated by the candidate, which we will consider. This 'alternative evidence' will be coursework, class assessments or mock exams. To take a holistic view on the appropriate result, our Examiners will also take account of how the other candidates at that school/college performed in the exam.

Post Results Service:

This service will run after candidates have received their certificates. If a school or college is concerned by a candidate's result, they can request a clerical check and/or a marking review of the script. The 'script' is the name we give to the candidate's exam answer paper. If this check/review of the marking of the script, leads to a change of grade (either up or down), this will be amended on our system and a new certificate will be issued to the candidate. There will be no consideration of 'alternative evidence' with this service. If the original grade remains unchanged after the check/review of the marking of the script, the school or college will be charged for this service.

Curriculum for Excellence

National 5 Question Paper

In response to feedback on the National 5 Modern Studies Specimen Question Paper, there has been a minor modification to the wording used for one question type.

To make the *Selective in the Use of Facts* question type more accessible to candidates, the following wording will now appear in future National 5 Modern Studies Question Papers including 2014:

In your answer you must:

- *give evidence from the sources that supports (name of person presenting the view will be inserted) view*
- and*
- *give evidence from the sources that opposes (name of person presenting the view will be inserted) view*

Your answer must be based on all three sources.

National 5 Assignment

The uplift date for the above candidate submissions is 25 March 2014.

Commonly Asked Questions

To assist teachers with National 3, National 4 and National 5 Modern Studies, SQA has published subject-specific common questions and answers. These can be found on the Modern Studies CfE page of the SQA website and will be periodically updated.

Verification

The first round of Verification activity took place in November and we thank all the nominees for their valuable contribution in carrying out this process.

After each round of verification activity, SQA will publish key messages that have been identified by each verification team. The Verification Key Messages for Modern Studies are now available on the CfE Modern Studies pages, under the level and within the 'verification' tab.

Prior Verified Assessment Materials:

There has been a review of the Modern Studies Prior Verified Assessment Materials which were situated on the secure pages of SQA's website.

Centres should note that any Prior Verified Assessment Materials which have been previously downloaded and used will be acceptable for verification purposes for the 2013-14 verification programme.

For information, the following have been removed from the website and centres should not continue to use these.

Social Issues in the UK	H23F 75 (ID 02)
Democracy in Scotland	H23C 74 (ID01)
Democracy in Scotland	H23C 75 (ID01)
Bank of Questions	C749 75 (ID 01)

The following pack has been subject to amendment and has now been re-published:

International Issues H23G 75 (ID 01)

Please use this version for any future assessment activities.

Subject key messages can be found on each [subject page](#), under the level and within the 'verification' tab.

Textbooks

Publishers are beginning to produce textbooks to support the new National Qualifications in Modern Studies. Centres are reminded that while textbooks serve as a useful guide to teaching and learning they do not specify what could be assessed by SQA in external examinations. For this information centres should refer to the mandatory course coverage in the Course Assessment Specification. The Course Assessment Specification for National 5 Modern Studies can be found using the following link:

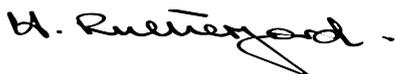
http://www.sqa.org.uk/files_ccc/CfE_CourseAssessSpec_N5_SocialStudies_ModernStudies.pdf

National Qualifications Support Teams

Are you aware that we are currently recruiting for members of a National Qualifications Support Team for Modern Studies? NQSTs are practitioner consultation groups that will feed back to SQA on the internal and external assessment of National Qualifications. These groups will communicate via secure online discussion forums as well as an annual meeting. For more information and to apply please visit <http://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/67177.html>

If you wish further clarification on any of the above, please contact either Duncan Cox (0345 213 5498; duncan.cox@sqa.org.uk) or myself at the above address.

Yours faithfully



Hilary Rutherford
Qualifications Manager