

September 2010

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

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

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Dear Colleague

National Qualifications Update — Modern Studies and Politics

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

SQA Website

The subject pages are the main source of information on National Qualifications in Modern Studies and Politics. They contain the current and past reports of Principal Assessors and the Senior Verifiers, Course Specifications/Arrangements documents and specimen papers, previous National Qualifications updates and marking instructions for the 2010 and recent diets. The address of the website is **www.sqa.org.uk**.

Update on the 2010 diet

Principal Assessors and their examining teams are thanked for their efforts in delivering a successful diet. The full reports of the Principal Assessors, now known as the External Assessment Reports, will appear on our website shortly. These include summary statistics on entry figures, pass rates etc.

Modern Studies

Advanced Higher

Responses were generally very satisfactory with nearly 90% of candidates achieving grade A-C.

Flyleafs and notes for the submission of candidate's Dissertations are available only on the secure part of the SQA website via SQA Co-ordinators. When 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) by 1 November.

Centres are reminded that candidates' dissertations should come from the Study Theme that the candidate is studying for the examination. The previous arrangements allowed a wider choice but experience showed that this led to weaker dissertations where candidates chose outwith their Advanced Higher Study Theme.

A paper containing advice to centres on how to improve performance at Advanced Higher is available on the SQA website –

www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/files_ccc/NQModernStudiesImprovingPerformanceAdvHigher.pdf

Marked answers from a previous year's diet are available on the Understanding Standards section of the SQA website –

www.understandingstandards.org.uk

Higher

The number of candidates increased and results were again very encouraging.

Centres should note that in the 2011 examination, the statistical sources will be renumbered C1-C5 (as opposed to, for example, Source C1a and C1b) and the EV questions 1-4 (as opposed, for example, to Q2a and Q2b). The Decision Making Report will be question 5. This should make it clearer to candidates that they need to use all the sources. The style of sources and questions will remain as before and the EV questions will still add up to 10 marks.

Updated versions of the Social Issues in the UK NABs will shortly be available on the SQA secure site. These will incorporate more up to date information and statistics. Centres may use the old or new versions during the 2010/11 session.

Examples of marked answers from a previous year's diet are available on the Understanding Standards section of the SQA website –

www.understandingstandards.org.uk

Two documents giving advice on delivering Higher are also available on the SQA website -

www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/files_ccc/Improving_Performance_Higher_Modern_Studies_Advice.pdf

www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/files_ccc/Improving_Performance_Higher_Modern_Studies_Questions.pdf

Intermediate

Most candidates still continue to perform better in Evaluating questions compared to Knowledge and Understanding and are stronger in the UK part of the exam compared to International Issues.

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

The examiners were very pleased with the responses from candidates across the three papers. The change to the wording of the 'Selective use of Facts' 8 mark question in Credit ES made it clear to candidates what they are expected to do to achieve full marks. This style of question will continue in future Credit papers.

Politics

Higher

Candidate numbers again increased from 163 to 202 and presenting centres increased from 16 to 21. Many candidates were from S6 and the A-C pass rate was 88.6% pre-appeal.

Marked answers from the Understanding Standards day held in February 2010 are now available on the Understanding Standards section of the SQA website –

www.understandingstandards.org.uk

Estimates and Appeals

The document *Guidance on Estimates, Absentees and Assessment* is available on our website. It is a concern that a minority of centres do not seem to be using this information and in some cases this can lead to absentee or appeal evidence that is not robust enough to allow an award to be made.

Centres should note the advice given about raising cut-off scores where split prelims are used. Centres are reminded that SQA past paper questions may be used in Prelims but 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.

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.

At Advanced Higher Modern Studies, 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.

All queries on appeals should be addressed to the Appeals Helpline at **appeals@sqa.org.uk**.

Verification

The reports of the Senior Verifiers will soon be available from the subject page of the website. They give clear and helpful advice on the verification process. Centres should indicate clearly which NAB is being used. It is also helpful if centres/candidates date the evidence when it is produced.

Markers

SQA is again grateful to those who marked in the 2010 diet. It is generally recognised that marking for SQA is excellent in-service, and can be a major factor in promoting improved performance in individual centres.

Invitations to mark for the 2011 diet will shortly be issued. While reserves exist at all levels, it is impossible to predict acceptance rates by markers. Those wishing to become markers should

complete an application form, which is available to download from the appointee management section of the SQA website.

Learning and Teaching Materials

Support materials are commissioned by LTScotland. All comments and queries regarding support materials should be addressed directly to them (08700 100 297 or enquiries@LTScotland.org.uk).

If you wish further clarification of any points in this letter, please contact either Duncan Cox (duncan.cox@sqa.org.uk) or myself at the above address. I look forward to meeting many Modern Studies teachers at the MSA conference on 6 November.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Stanley da Prato". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping underline that loops back under the name.

Stan da Prato
Qualifications Manager