



Course Report 2018

Subject	Modern Studies
Level	National 5

This report provides information on the performance of candidates. Teachers, lecturers and assessors may find it useful when preparing candidates for future assessment. The report is intended to be constructive and informative and to promote better understanding. It would be helpful to read this report in conjunction with the published assessment documents and marking instructions.

The statistics used in this report have been compiled before the completion of any Post Results Services.

Section 1: comments on the assessment

Summary of the course assessment

Component 1: question paper

The 2018 National 5 Modern Studies question paper had a total of 80 marks (80% of the overall course total) and was completed in 2 hours and 20 minutes.

The question paper proved to be accessible to the majority of candidates. However, there was clear evidence that some candidates were presented at the wrong level, with a number gaining fewer than 20 marks.

Overall, there was evidence of candidates answering both skills-based questions and knowledge-based questions to a very good standard.

Very few candidates attempted all six parts of the paper, and only a small number completed both parts in any of the sections. Given that all candidates now complete the same skills-based question in each section, there is no chance of completing the knowledge-based questions in one part of a section and the skills-based question in another part. This prevented candidates from losing marks, as had occurred in previous papers.

There was little evidence that candidates had experienced difficulty in completing the question paper within the allotted time.

Component 2: assignment

The assignment had a total of 20 marks (20% of the overall course total). The assignment consisted of a written report, based on the candidate's individual research, written under supervision in 1 hour.

The assignment proved to be very accessible for candidates. The majority performed well and had been effectively prepared and advised by centres.

Part A — 'research topic/issue' section

Although 0 marks were available, candidates still took the opportunity to use this section to identify their topic or issue, with many going on to state their aims for the assignment.

Part B — 'research methods' section

This section was worth a maximum of 10 marks, however, candidates gained 0 marks if they simply gave a generic description of the methods of research they had used, or if they made no reference to their research sheet. There was clear evidence of candidates accessing the full range of marks available. However, for part B, many candidates still gave a response that was generic in nature and made little or no specific reference to their own research, preventing them from accessing the full range of marks.

Part C — 'research findings' and Part D — 'research conclusions' sections

These sections were sometimes copied from research sheets and candidates were awarded 0 marks if there was no further analysis of information. Some candidates confused these

sections and repeated information in part D that they had given in part C — this warranted no further marks.

Most candidates used the research sheets appropriately. A minority used them as a plan and, as a result, sometimes failed to gain marks due to copying.

Section 2: comments on candidate performance

Areas in which candidates performed well

Component 1: question paper

Responses to knowledge questions requiring candidates to 'describe' were generally handled well across all three sections, however 'explain' questions were less well done.

'Skills' questions were generally well-handled and showed that candidates had been well-prepared. However, candidates were weakest in the 'conclusions' question. Centres should pay clear attention to the general marking principles applied to the conclusions question which appear before the detailed marking instructions provided.

In particular, the following questions were completed to a high standard:

Section 1

Parts A and B, questions 2 and 5 — candidates completed this question well. The vast majority of candidates selected pressure groups and appeared to understand how they gain influence in a democracy.

Parts A and B, question 7 — candidates were well-prepared for this skills-based question that required them to identify evidence from sources to support and oppose a given viewpoint. The removal of the terminology 'selective in the use of facts' from this question, which has occurred in previous years, has clearly removed the confusion that a number of candidates experienced. Centres should not use 'selective in the use of facts' terminology when teaching this element, as candidates are no longer required to differentiate between what is selective and what is not selective.

Section 2

Part D, question 11 — it appeared that centres had used the terminology from the course specification, 'perpetrators' and as such, candidates were well-equipped for this type of question.

Part D, question 14 — candidates performed well when making a decision based on two options. Candidates were clearly able to make and justify a decision using all sources presented. However, less able candidates continued to struggle to explain why they did not choose the other option.

Section 3

Part F, question 18 — this question was completed to an exceptionally high standard. Candidates who were able to identify their conflict or issue and give two clear descriptions of causes of international conflicts or issues they had studied, often with very detailed exemplification, accessed the full range of marks available.

Component 2: assignment

Overall, candidates performed well in the assignment. The vast majority chose a relevant modern studies topic to research, however, there was continued evidence that candidates

are still selecting topics that would be more suited to a History or RMPS assignment which can disadvantage candidates.

Part B was completed relatively well, with many candidates successfully analysing the effectiveness of the research methods they had selected and providing appropriate evidence of their research methods, both primary and secondary.

Part C was completed very well, however there were still a number of candidates who gained 0 marks for this section due to directly copying from their research sheet.

Part D was completed well by a number of candidates, however there was evidence that candidates struggled to draw conclusions based on their research. A number of candidates simply repeated findings, while others gained 0 marks due to directly copying from their research sheets.

Areas which candidates found demanding

Component 1: question paper

Section 1

Parts A and B, questions 1 and 4 — candidate performance in these questions was extremely variable with many candidates failing to understand how either the MSP or the MP represents their constituents in parliament. There was clear evidence that a number of candidates confused representation in parliament with representation in the constituency. Furthermore, a significant number of candidates gave a response that would have been more suited to a question on election campaign methods, which had no bearing on the question.

Part A, question 3(a) — a number of candidates were unable to give a detailed explanation of why people in Scotland choose not to vote. Answers were often very vague and repetitive.

Section 2

Part C, question 8 — candidates often failed to understand what was being asked and confused the private sector with central government, giving a description of government benefits that attempt to reduce inequalities.

Part D, question 11 — a number of candidates simply gave two descriptions of punishments that a perpetrator may incur — this was treated as a list-type answer and awarded a maximum of 2 marks. Centres should aim to support candidates with a wider knowledge of the different consequences perpetrators may face.

Section 3

Part E, question 15 — a number of candidates gave very generic answers of how the world power they had studied can have an economic influence on other countries rather than giving specific descriptions relating to the world power they had studied. A number of candidates also gave no descriptions relating to economic influence, simply referring to cultural, political or military influence, with no direct link back to economic influence.

Part E, question 16 — a number of candidates gave very generic descriptions of government attempts to solve social and economic problems, with no descriptions of actual interventions.

Part E, question 17 — a number of candidates gave very basic explanations of why some groups are under-represented. Candidates often failed to identify which groups they were discussing and the answers often appeared non-specific. There was also limited exemplification in some answers which restricted the number of marks available.

Part F — in general it was often difficult to establish which international conflict or issue candidates had studied.

Part F, question 19 — a number of candidates gave very generic descriptions of attempts to resolve international conflicts and issues, with no descriptions of actual interventions.

Part F, question 20 — a number of candidates did not fully understand the question. Candidates failed to make reference to the impact the international conflict or issue has on other countries and their governments. Many candidates simply described how the international issue or conflict had an impact on the country where the conflict or issue originated.

Component 2: assignment

The main reasons why candidates failed to gain marks in the assignment were: copying from research sheets, inappropriate topics, and generic descriptions of research methods that did not refer to their own individual research.

Research topic/issue

Some candidates could not access the full range of marks in the assignment as a result of the topic or issue they had chosen. Some topics were too historical, geographical or scientific. Others focused on issues that would have been better suited to RMPS.

Research methods

A number of candidates continue to make little or no specific reference to their own research. Many provided what appeared to be memorised list-type answers of advantages and disadvantages of 'generic' research methods such as 'surveys'. This gains 0 marks and centres must advise candidates that they should refer directly to 'their survey'.

In this section a small number of candidates did not gain marks as they copied their answers from their research sheets. Furthermore, those candidates who did not submit the research sheet could not access the full range of marks available.

Research findings/research conclusions

Many candidates confused these two sections and wrote very similar answers for both. Candidates who scored best, provided points of knowledge that related clearly to their chosen topic and linked well to the research evidence provided, while being able to make detailed conclusions based on their findings.

A number of candidates were unable to access the marks available due to copying from their research sheets.

Section 3: advice for the preparation of future candidates

Component 1: question paper

Centres should re-emphasise the importance of expanding knowledge answers using specific, 'real world', current examples. Candidates should be reminded that when knowledge questions ask for 'two ways'/'maximum of three reasons', writing more should be avoided as only the best two or three points in the answer will gain marks.

Centres should re-emphasise to candidates the importance of stating which world power, issue or conflict they have studied so that answers are marked appropriately. Specifically centres who study 'development in Africa' should make this clear to candidates as it is often very difficult to establish what the issue studied has been, as candidates will discuss a number of issues in their answers, for example, famine, debt, poverty, poor health, poor education.

Candidates should be encouraged to compare statistics in skills-based questions, showing changes over time; showing differences between ethnic groups/genders/countries etc; and to make evaluative comments supported by evidence such as 'significant increase/decrease', 'showing similarities/differences' etc, when analysing information in skills questions. Candidates will not gain marks for a limited evaluation.

Candidates should always explicitly state in their 'skills' answers which option they have chosen, which of the bullet-pointed conclusions they are addressing, and whether they support or oppose a point of view. This will support the candidate in terms of giving a more structured response.

Centres should also ensure that candidates understand the requirements of the 'options' question in relation to part (iii) — 'Explain why you did not choose the other option'. It was evident that this often confused candidates and they gave incorrect and/or irrelevant evidence.

Centres should ensure that they are entirely familiar with the course specification to ensure that the mandatory content has been delivered to candidates.

Component 2: assignment

Centres should emphasise that candidates must choose their own topic for research without being directed, and that they should not use exactly the same resources as everyone else in their class.

Topics must clearly address a relevant, contemporary modern studies issue. Candidates would be best advised not to combine modern studies topics with their assignments in other subjects in order to avoid using irrelevant or historical information. Topics that should be avoided in respect of this include:

- ◆ accounts/descriptions of historical crimes/criminals
- ◆ accounts of historical international events, for example, Rwandan genocide, Cold War
- ◆ euthanasia

- ◆ animal rights
- ◆ abortion
- ◆ death penalty
- ◆ corruption in sport

Research evidence is intended to provide evidence that the candidate has carried out their own research. Candidates should therefore be discouraged from using the two A4 research sheets as a plan. Furthermore, centres should emphasise to candidates that direct copying from the research sheets will gain 0 marks, and where research evidence is not identified, full marks cannot be achieved. Any 'coded' research evidence will also be treated as direct copying.

Candidates who have used the hypothesis and aims approach should be encouraged to address these in the 'conclusions' section of their report. Furthermore, candidates who have carried out a survey should be able to make detailed, well-supported conclusions from their research; this could be used in the conclusions section to access the full range of marks. Candidates should also be advised that any generic descriptions of research methods will not gain marks — they should use this section to discuss the relative strengths and/or weaknesses of the actual research methods they undertook.

Centres should advise candidates to use the 'findings' section of the report to demonstrate knowledge of their topic which may not directly answer their aims or prove or disprove their hypothesis. Candidates should also be reminded that they must make at least one direct link in their findings to the research methods discussed in section B in order to access the full range of marks available.

Candidates are expected to use the research sheet to generate the evidence under controlled conditions, and they **must** submit it with their evidence. The research sheet is not assessed formally. However it is important that teachers/lecturers ensure that candidates know how to use and submit research sheet(s) which are reviewed during the marking process.

Grade boundary and statistical information:

Statistical information: update on courses

Number of resulted entries in 2017	12385
Number of resulted entries in 2018	11867

Statistical information: performance of candidates

Distribution of course awards including grade boundaries

Distribution of course awards	Percentage	Cumulative %	Number of candidates	Lowest mark
Maximum mark				
A	29.5%	29.5%	3497	70
B	21.1%	50.6%	2509	60
C	19.5%	70.1%	2316	50
D	15.5%	85.6%	1835	40
No award	14.4%	-	1710	-

General commentary on grade boundaries

SQA's main aim is to be fair to candidates across all subjects and all levels and maintain comparable standards across the years, even as arrangements evolve and change.

SQA aims to set examinations and create marking instructions which allow a competent candidate to score a minimum of 50% of the available marks (the notional C boundary) and a well prepared, very competent candidate to score at least 70% of the available marks (the notional A boundary).

It is very challenging to get the standard on target every year, in every subject at every level.

Therefore SQA holds a grade boundary meeting every year for each subject at each level to bring together all the information available (statistical and judgemental). The Principal Assessor and SQA Qualifications Manager meet with the relevant SQA Business Manager and Statistician to discuss the evidence and make decisions. The meetings are chaired by members of the management team at SQA.

- ◆ The grade boundaries can be adjusted downwards if there is evidence that the exam is more challenging than usual, allowing the pass rate to be unaffected by this circumstance.
- ◆ The grade boundaries can be adjusted upwards if there is evidence that the exam is less challenging than usual, allowing the pass rate to be unaffected by this circumstance.
- ◆ Where standards are comparable to previous years, similar grade boundaries are maintained.

Grade boundaries from exam papers in the same subject at the same level tend to be marginally different year to year. This is because the particular questions, and the mix of questions, are different. This is also the case for exams set by centres. If SQA alters a boundary, this does not mean that centres should necessarily alter their boundary in the corresponding practice exam paper.