

Improving Performance in Advanced Higher Modern Studies

Summary of Rationale

Advanced Higher Modern Studies is concerned with developing the candidate's knowledge and understanding, evaluative and investigative skills in relation to a topic in some depth.

Candidates undertaking *Advanced Higher Modern Studies* will develop an understanding of the importance of sound evidence, both qualitative and quantitative, gathered in a disciplined and ordered way, as the basis of their work.

They will also evaluate critically a variety of political and social science research methods and they will carry out independent research to develop their investigative skills (planning, researching, analysing, synthesising and presenting) with reference to one of the Study Themes in the syllabus.

Candidates should be encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning.

Summary of Course Aims

The aims of the *Advanced Higher Modern Studies* Course are to develop and enhance important skills. These skills include:

- ◆ organising and analysing complex data
- ◆ adopting a structured approach to research of a contemporary topic
- ◆ constructing and sustaining lines of argument which reflect the complexity of the issues they address
- ◆ presenting conclusions in a clear way, while reflecting the complexity of the topic under consideration
- ◆ critical analysis of political and social science research, including evaluating evidence and detecting and explaining a lack of objectivity
- ◆ participating in debate and discussion, through which attitudes of open-mindedness and tolerance are fostered.

Advanced Higher Course

The Advanced Higher Modern Studies course descriptors changed for the exam in 2009. The descriptors are available on the SQA website.

For the examination in 2009 and beyond:

- ◆ the Course will consist of two Units: *Political and Social Issues* and *Modern Studies: Practical Research*. Within each Unit there are three Study Themes. In each Study Theme, candidates should be aware of current trends and issues
- ◆ candidates must study one of three Study Themes: Comparative Politics and Research Methods **or** Law and Order and Research Methods **or** The European Union and Research Methods. Each Study Theme contains four contexts.

Course assessment

The external assessment of the Course comprises the following:

- ◆ an externally set and assessed Question Paper lasting three hours, worth 90 marks
- ◆ a dissertation worth 45 marks.

The total for the Course is 135 marks.

In the external paper candidates should answer on one of the three themes. Each theme will have one question set on each of the four component contexts, each worth 30 marks; candidates should answer two questions. In addition, candidates are required to answer two questions, each worth 15 marks and comprising a series of short and/or extended-response items on research methods. There will be no choice of question on research methods within each Study Theme.

The dissertation should be between 4,000 and 5,000 words. A flat penalty of 4 marks will be imposed where the word limit has been exceeded. This will also be invoked where the marker has cause to doubt the total for which the candidate has signed. The word limit applies to the body of the text, and does not include titles, contents page, headings, methodology, appendices, bibliography, diagrams, maps, tables of figures, charts or footnotes. There is a list of titles for the dissertation posted on the SQA website. Candidates may devise an alternative title. Should they so wish, centres may submit, by 1 November, such titles for approval using the approval form on the SQA secure site.

Checklist

The following url gives a very helpful checklist of all the sources of information at Advanced Higher Modern Studies.

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

The Dissertation in Advanced Higher Modern Studies

The following section gives advice on aspects of the dissertation such as:

- word length
- mark allocation
- choosing a dissertation topic
- how to formulate: title/hypothesis/research question/aim/chapter question
- structure of the dissertation
- introduction
- description, justification and evaluation of research methods
- main body of the dissertation: analysis and synthesis
sub conclusions
- overall conclusion(s)
- plagiarism
- referencing
- bibliography
- appendices
- proof reading
- legibility
- final presentation

The following points of advice will assist both the centre and the candidate to improve the standard of the dissertation.

Word length

The dissertation must be between 4000 and 5000 words in length. If it is over 5000 words, a 4 mark penalty (10%) will incur. The word count must be on the bottom of each page and there must be an overall word count on the Dissertation flysheet (SQA). The 5000 word count includes the following:

- introduction
- main body of dissertation
- conclusion(s)

Several candidates disadvantage themselves by submitting dissertations that are too short. However, the majority of candidates produce dissertations that are very close to the maximum 5000 words. Obviously an editing process has been undertaken to ensure that they do not exceed the word limit. This can be a very positive experience (if not left to the last minute). Candidates can usefully read each other's work - taking notes on what they do not understand/what is repetitive etc as well as proof reading for grammar and spelling. This is an example of peer assessment and as such meets some of the criteria for both the *Curriculum for Excellence* and *Assessment is for Learning*.

Mark allocation

There are 45 marks available for the dissertation: a third of the overall marks for the Course award for Advanced Higher Modern Studies (total 135).

The 45 marks are allocated as follows:

- ◆ 10 marks for introductory sections
- ◆ 25 marks for analysis and synthesis (main body of dissertation)
- ◆ 10 marks for conclusions that address the hypothesis.

How to choose a dissertation topic

The dissertation must come from the Study Theme(s) at Advanced Higher that the centre is studying for the examination e.g. Comparative Politics and Research Methods (Study Theme 1) or Law and Order and Research Methods (Study Theme 2) or European Union and Research Methods (Study Theme 3).

A study of the detailed content for the Study Theme will give some ideas of topics that are worth researching. This can be found in the Arrangements Document for Advanced Higher (First edition published May 2007).

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

A list of Approved Topics can be found on the website and this will be updated regularly. It is recommended that all dissertation titles and hypotheses and aims are sent to SQA by 1st November for approval. Information on this process can be found on the SQA secure website.

Title and hypothesis

There are distinct differences between a title, a hypothesis and a research question.

A title, for example, might be “*Rehabilitation in Scottish Prisons.*”

A hypothesis might be “*Scottish prisons fail to rehabilitate all prisoners.*”

A research question might be “*To what extent do Scottish Prisons fail to rehabilitate prisoners?*”

A hypothesis is the preferred focus for a dissertation in Advanced Higher Modern Studies. Formulating a hypothesis that is specific and can be tested is one way to improve performance in the dissertation. Any investigation or research is motivated by a question - what causes recidivism? Has George Bush been a successful President?

A candidate studying recidivism could investigate the link between recidivism and overcrowding in prison, rehabilitation, community disposals, the causes of crime etc. In practice the researcher probably already has a hunch about the correct answer. For example the hypothesis that poor rehabilitation in prison is the main cause of recidivism limits the amount of territory to cover to test the hypothesis.

Working with a hypothesis helps reduce research tasks to one set of structured aims. In research the lack of a strict structure leads to a dissertation that is too descriptive, lacks depth and detail and has limited analysis and synthesis – a poor dissertation and one that is liable to fail.

Some hypotheses:

- ST1: The First Past the Post electoral system is both out of date and undemocratic.
ST2: There are no effective alternatives to prison.
ST2: Bad parenting is the main cause of youth crime.
ST3: The European Union Transport Policy is a total failure.

The underlined words are beneficial to the hypothesis since they help the focus of the dissertation i.e. main cause means that other causes have to be researched as well.

Research questions

These are formed as a result of the hypothesis. They break down the hypothesis into manageable research areas e.g.

Hypothesis: Bad parenting is the main cause of youth crime.

Research questions:

- What are the causes of youth crime?
- To what extent is there a link between bad parenting and youth crime?
- To what extent is there a link between drugs/alcohol and youth crime?
- To what extent is there a link between educational attainment and youth crime?

By answering these research questions, it will be possible to reach a conclusion that addresses/tests the hypothesis.

Structure of the dissertation

Poorly planned dissertations generally get poor marks. Part of the planning process is the structure of the dissertation. An introduction, three or four chapters and a conclusion is the standard structure.

Introduction

This section is crucial to setting the scene for the research findings that follow. It should interest the reader by setting the context for the dissertation, state the hypothesis and the related research questions showing the link between them. There should be a summary of research methods used (with full details in an appendix). Candidates should spend time on the introduction since, along with other sections, there are ten marks awarded to this. The sections/features (not always in the introduction chapter) that are taken into consideration when awarding marks out of ten are:

- contents page
- references/footnotes
- bibliography that includes academic sources
- appendices
- hypothesis that is relevant
- research questions/aims/chapter questions that are linked to the hypothesis and are insightful
- variety of research methods used
- research methods used throughout the dissertation
- description, justification and evaluation of research methods
- well written introduction that sets the scene

Description, justification and evaluation of research methods

This is crucial to the dissertation. It is not included in the word count if it is submitted as a separate section such as an appendix. Research methods used should be described in some depth and then their use justified. There should also be an in-depth evaluation of how useful these methods have been in helping research the topic.

There are many ways of presenting this information. Here is a candidate's evaluation of the research methods they used to test their hypothesis on prisons:

Hypothesis - Prisons impact disproportionately harshly on female prisoners compared with males.

Evaluation - The most valuable method of research for this dissertation proved to be primary methods such as visiting the prisons and speaking with prison staff.

Primary methods have many advantages as they give a first hand knowledge of prison standards and also an opportunity to ask direct questions with follow up questions allowing wider and more specified information to be identified. However these primary methods may lead to biased information due to prison staff trying to portray a positive impression of the prison in which they work. Visits to Barlinnie, Cornton Vale, Perth and Castle Huntly were essential to examine the differences in standards and attitudes between male and female prisons. Speaking to staff allowed direct feedback from within the prison concerning both the effectiveness of services and the behaviour of inmates. Access to views inside the prisons allowed an understanding of prisoners' own situations and reinforced the needs for specific services designed to assist each person individually. These visits were particularly relevant as they were all to Scottish prisons and allowed a comparison between services to males and females.

Many secondary methods of research also proved valuable as they often come from sources outwith the prison service so do not have a one sided view. These sources are also easy to find and there are many available. The internet proved valuable in some respects but, in others, the information found was biased and unreliable. Many articles were available from newspapers such as the Herald and the Scotsman with critical analysis of the current prison situation. The websites for charities helping inmates and their families were of use as they targeted specific groups and their needs and were helpful in identifying the main problem areas when trying to support prisoners (see bibliography for materials used).

Many of the statistics and research found were based on the UK prison population rather than Scotland which leads to analysis changing focus between the Home Office, the Scottish Prison Service and the Scottish Government as there are limited research findings available to cover all areas of the Scottish service. As the prison population of Scotland makes up only a small percentage of the total UK prison population, research findings were likely to incorporate the whole population which proved less relevant. Several of the studies found, such as the Cornton Vale Report 2005, were relevant for the first two aims but provided little evidence of the consequences and results of services used. As successes are difficult to measure within prisons, direct responses from experts proved more helpful as they have first hand knowledge.

Many studies involving women in prison lacked a corresponding study focusing on males. This made comparisons more difficult. However, on the subject of education within prison, studies compared men and women. Studies were also often not current as they take time to create and compile thoroughly. This problem was also encountered when using the textbook Harambos and Holborn, *Sociology: Themes and Perspectives*, however this allowed an evaluation between the current situation and how opinions have changed. It also helped identify why women commit crimes and the reasoning behind the treatment of them in prison.

This covers all that is required although it could be more specifically linked to each research question/aim.

Main body of the dissertation

The main body of the dissertation is worth 25 marks out of 45 and it is the area that candidates spend most of time on. (There are another 20 marks worth spending just as much time on!). Three or four main chapters should be sufficient to analyse and synthesise the evidence gathered to address/test the hypothesis. A dissertation that is wholly descriptive will not pass. Hence, it is important that candidates know how to analyse and synthesise succinctly.

Analysis begins with a theory or big idea. The writer must try to take things apart to examine the individual pieces that make up the whole. Synthesis puts the pieces back together but 'in a different order' to might make a new point.

Here is a simplistic example of analysis and synthesis from a candidate's dissertation:

"Currently, female prison sentences no longer affect only the criminal. A prison sentence has deteriorating effects on the prisoner's family in particular the children. Without their mother, children feel abandoned. As the Mothers' Union states: *"giving a mother of young children a custodial sentence effectively condemns the whole family to prison."* This is true as a recent HMP report declared: within British prisons 55% of females have children under sixteen; 33% a child under five and 20% are lone parents. Most disturbingly only 5% of the 8,000 children with incarcerated mothers remain in the family home¹ This shows that families are affected to a great extent by their mothers being imprisoned; many become alone, afraid and even turn to criminal activities themselves."

It gives a view point and backs it up with recent statistics and then analyses the point albeit simplistically. The synthesis is "many become alone, afraid and even turn to criminal activities themselves."

When evidence is incorporated into the dissertation it must always link it back the hypothesis. Candidates must continually explain **how** and **why** it means what they say it means.

Here is another more sophisticated example from the same candidate. Try to identify examples of analysis and synthesis.

"An increasing number of reports have discovered that children of female prisoners experience physiological problems; in particular, many become withdrawn or develop emotional and behavioural problems. Studies show that children with incarcerated mothers are more likely to wet their beds, do poorly in school and refuse to eat. They also experience financial hardship, the shame and social stigma that prison carries, loss of emotional support and fear for their mother's safety. The effect on society is equally alarming: children with imprisoned parents are at increased risk for poor academic treatment, truancy, dropping out of school, gang involvement, early pregnancy, drug abuse and delinquency. As sociologists Gabel and Johnston state:

"Three characteristics that distinguish children of incarcerated parents from their peers are:

- 1. inadequate quality of care, mainly due to poverty;*
- 2. lack of family support; and*
- 3. enduring childhood trauma."*

These youngsters are often overlooked by the government. Clearly more support needs to be directed towards children of prisoners and the effect upon them should be taken into account during court hearings.

In 2004, Home Office Minister Hazel Blears stated that children of criminals will be targeted at a young age for special help to break the crime cycle. Ms Blears also described how *"About 65% of the estimated 125,000 children who have a family in prison "will end up in prison themselves."*

Nevertheless, it is unfair to brand children of criminals as suspects of future criminal acts. As Chief Executive of Mother's Union Reg Bailey declared:

"Jailing mothers causes a lot of families' unnecessary distress. Their children have not committed any crime, but they are the innocent victims of the current sentencing policy."

Academic Susan Mc Vie informed the BBC of the theory: *"kids who are labelled may actually become offenders."* This shows by highlighting a minority of children as future criminals this will cause distress therefore encouraging them further to become criminals. In addition, sociologists such as Richards have discovered that having a mother in prison causes more mental and emotional problems than having a father in prison."

Sub conclusions

It is recommended practice that each chapter/research question is concluded ie the research question is addressed.

Again, here is an example from the same candidate writing about prisons. Note that at the end, the candidate makes a link sentence onto the next chapter which is about alternatives.

Chapter 2

To what extent does prison affect the families of female prisoners?

Conclusion to the chapter:

"With all of this taken into account, it is evident that prison has terrible effects on not only the prisoners but also the families especially the children as many not only lose their mothers but their house, belongings and sense of security and comfort. Their worlds are turned upside down and for many their lives never get back on track. There needs to be greater action to benefit families as well as providing a suitable punishment for the crime committed but one which does not destroy families. It has been suggested that the judge should consider the background of the women. This is with particular regards to the majority of females who take part in petty thefts and are first time offenders. It would therefore be of greater benefit to allocate alternatives to prison allowing women to be punished and families to remain together."

Overall, the main body of the dissertation is marked out of 25. The following are the criteria that are used:

- approach that is analytical and not descriptive
- clear and coherent argument that is fully developed
- supporting evidence that has been critically appraised and attributed
- analysis/synthesis that provide clear links with hypothesis/research questions

Overall conclusion(s)

There are 10 marks out of the 45 available for conclusions. This includes the conclusions drawn in each chapter. It is rare for candidates to get the full 10 marks in this section. It seems to be that this is an area (like the introductory section) where candidates rush their work. The criteria set down by the Arrangements document can be summarised as:

- conclusions that are based on evidence collected
- conclusions that are: valid
 relevant
 detailed
- conclusions that address hypothesis

Here are the hypothesis and research questions and overall conclusion from the same candidate:

"My hypothesis is that I believe that presently female human rights are not met to a substantial extent within the UK prison system.

To test this, my dissertation will cover the following:

1. What human rights should/do women have in prison?
2. To what extent does prison affect the families of female prisoners?
3. To what extent do rehabilitation programmes for women work?
4. To what extent do alternatives to prison meet female human rights more than prisons?"

Conclusion

"With all of this taken into consideration, it is my understanding based on evidence that I have collected, that, today the vast majority of UK prisons do not fulfil the human rights for female prisoners. Currently, with the overcrowding crisis growing, it would be beneficial to all and, in particular, the females themselves if those with first time offences which are largely petty crimes were taken out of the prison system and put into the alternatives such as rehabilitation programmes which are more successful as they keep family connections and also help women improve their lives for the future.

Moreover, regarding the UK prison system, with minimal access to family, in particular, in Scotland, has damaging effects on family as many children convert to crime themselves and a cycle develops as shown by sociologists Richards, Johnstone and Gabel. Therefore to decrease crime in the long term it would be better to take into greater consideration the background and family of the female prisoner.

For those female prisoners who have committed serious violent offences, evidence shows that prison is the best place for these women, nevertheless the evidence also points to the fact that prison should not just be about locking criminals up to think about their actions but prison should benefit the females in the long term. Therefore it would be advantageous for prisons to contain more suitable rehabilitation programmes for females regarding health, accommodation and family rather than the male rehabilitation programmes.

Although over the years the UK prison system had advanced to a certain extent in meeting female's human rights within prison: "*the right to life, the right to freely express your views and the right to respect for your private and family life*" I believe that in the future with the increase in alternatives that more female offenders will be able to improve from either the rehabilitation programmes within prisons or more successfully the alternatives to prison. In the future with the necessary action taken the prisons of the UK will be able to successfully meet the Human Rights regarding female offenders.

Consequently, my hypothesis that female human rights are not met to a substantial extent within the UK prison system has been proven as prison simply causes more distress than help. Nevertheless, with increased female opportunities it is likely that female human rights will expand."

This, along with the sub conclusions for each research question/chapter, would merit 10 out of 10 as it meets the criteria set out in the Arrangements document.

Plagiarism

Defining plagiarism

SQA's definition of plagiarism, as given in the leaflet, Your Coursework, is:

'Plagiarism involves taking someone else's words, thoughts or ideas and trying to pass them off as your own. This includes failing to acknowledge sources of information that you have used in your work. Some examples of plagiarism are:

- ◆ Including parts of someone else's work in your own without using quotation marks and identifying the source. This includes cutting and pasting information from the internet
- ◆ Copying, re-wording or summarising someone else's work and including it as your own without acknowledging the source
- ◆ Not labelling diagrams/illustrations that you have used
- ◆ Working together with other students on a task that should have been done on your own'

It is the responsibility of the candidate to ensure that plagiarised work is not submitted for assessment. Plagiarism means that the award will be cancelled.

For the centre: dealing with plagiarism

There are a number of clues which point to the possibility of plagiarism and the centre should remain alert to these.

Identification

Content

- Check for acknowledgement of sources as the work is being completed.
- Watch out for work which is suddenly completed with no evidence of intermediate stages having been completed.
- Varying quality of content - well-written passages interspersed with poorly-written or highly-detailed content.
- Check whether the work is in response to the set question/task. If the work appears to relate to an associated topic but does not directly address the question that has been posed, it is possible that the content has been copied and this should be investigated with the candidate.
- Dated expressions and references to past events as being contemporary can all be indications of work that has been copied.

Vocabulary, spelling and punctuation

- The use of a mixture of English and American vocabulary and spelling can be a sign that the work is not original.
- If the piece contains specialised terminology, jargon, obscure or advanced words, consider whether this is typical of the level of the candidate's work.

Style, tone and presentation

- Look for differences in the style or tone of writing.
- Look at the level of sophistication of the sentence structure and consider whether this is typical of the candidate's work. Is the use of language consistent, or does it vary?
- If the work is typed, is the size and style of font, headers and footers, margins etc uniform?

Confirmation

If a centre suspects plagiarism they should discuss their concerns with the candidate. If the candidate insists that the work is his or her own, try to locate the source of the material as a basis for further discussions.

Web searches

- type a four to six word phrase from the text (preferably one with an unusual phrase in it) directly into an internet search engine such as www.google.com or www.altavista.com and perform an 'exact phrase search'; you can do this using the 'Advanced Search' function. If the article was copied from the web there is a good chance that this approach will find it, particularly if a variety of search engines are used
- check the websites that the students use as these are common sources for essays and assignments. Use a search engine to find other similar sites. Once on the site, a quick search may be all that is needed to locate the source of a suspect piece
- if these searches do not yield any matches, the piece may have been taken from the 'invisible web', that is from articles which are not separately indexed to a search engine, even though the site itself may be. Sites run by newspapers, magazines, on-line encyclopaedias, etc fall into this category
- if an investigation is inconclusive, the work could be replaced with an alternative piece whose authenticity is not in doubt

SQA uses computer software which identifies plagiarised content.

Here is a really good website with lots of resources on how not to plagiarise!
<http://www.plagiarism.org/>

Referencing

Referencing is a way of crediting the sources (books, journals, websites, speakers) used in research.

A reference is required when a researcher:

- ◆ quotes another person word for word (direct quotation)
- ◆ paraphrases or summarises. Ideas or data obtained from another writer must be referenced even if the wording is changed
- ◆ uses statistics e.g. crime statistics
- ◆ uses tables, figures, diagrams and appendices. The source of these must be acknowledged unless they are entirely from the candidate's own research work.

It is just as important to cite electronic sources as it is to reference print materials since they are both covered by copyright law.

There are many forms of referencing that can be used. The most common is the Author-Date style. When quoting directly or indirectly from a source, the source must be acknowledged in the text by author name and year of publication. If quoting directly, a location reference such as page numbers and paragraph numbers is also required.

Direct quotation

Jamieson et al (1999) point out that for the vast majority of young people offending is a, "transitory phenomenon linked to their social development" (p.156).

Indirect quotation

For most young people, offending is a phase they pass through on their way to adulthood (Jamieson et al, 1999).

At the end of the dissertation or at the end of each chapter or at the foot of each page, provide the full bibliographic information for each source.

References must be listed in alphabetical order. Each reference should include four elements: (1) Author/Editor, (or if not known anon.) (2) Date, (3) Title and (4) Publication Information. Eg,

Jamieson, J., McIvor, G. and Murray, C. 1999 *Understanding Offending Among Young People*. Edinburgh: Scottish Executive.

Different sources such as books, reports, newspaper articles should be referenced in different ways.

Newspaper Article

Author, A. A. (Year, Month Day). Title of article.
Title of Newspaper.
Retrieved <http://www.someaddress.com/full/url/>

E-mails and Letters

These are not included in the list of references, but should be cited in the main text in parentheses: (G. Smith, personal communication, August 12, 2008).

There are many websites that will give this information eg
<http://www.lib.gla.ac.uk/researchskills/citationstyle.shtml>

Reference List

There are a number of ways to list references:

- at the end of the dissertation
- at the end of each chapter
- at the foot of each page

The alphabetical list of references that appears at the end of the chapter or dissertation contains the information about all of the sources used allowing readers to refer to them.

- the list of references must be on a new page at the end of your text
- the word References should be centred at the top of the page
- entries are arranged alphabetically by the author's last name or by the title if there is no author
- titles are italicised
- entries are double spaced

References at the foot of each page are favoured by many Advanced Higher Modern Studies candidates. Word processing packages have a feature that makes this easy for the candidate.

Footnotes

Footnotes are notes relating to the text and placed at the foot of a page. They are used for documentation and citation of relevant sources. For the purpose of this paper, footnotes and references are the same thing.

However, exceptionally, footnotes can be used briefly to indicate an idea or expand upon a quotation where to do so in the text would disturb the balance of the current argument.

Advice on putting together references and bibliography

- ◆ do it as you go along - keep a list of the works you look at as you look at them, perhaps on index cards or in a computer package such as EndNote.
- ◆ if you write down a potentially useful quotation, write down the reference along with it.
- ◆ if you photocopy something to read later, make sure that all the information you will need for your reference is on the photocopy -if it isn't, write it on NOW.
- ◆ never rely on memory to supply missing information.
- ◆ never leave referencing until the last minute.
- ◆ make sure your footnote numbers are consecutive, have no gaps and correspond to the footnotes themselves.
- ◆ make sure every source and/or person you cite is footnoted clearly.
- ◆ make sure every source you footnote is in the bibliography.
- ◆ make sure you are using the required style.

Bibliography

The difference between a Bibliography and References

A reference list should include only those works quoted or "referred to" directly within the context of the dissertation.

A bibliography is a list of the sources (books, audio visual resources, people, organisations etc) found useful in research. It should include items consulted but not used. A bibliography should be included at the end. Sources should normally be listed alphabetically, by surname of the author, or if there is no author, by the first word of the title (not 'the' or 'a' or 'an').

The bibliography can be divided according to the type of source used eg books; periodicals, journals and magazine articles; newspaper articles; official reports/government publications; leaflets and pamphlets; audio-visual materials; people/organisations; online sources.

EVERY work cited in footnotes and references should be in the bibliography, but the bibliography can also include works which are not in the footnotes/references i.e. used but not quoted directly in the text.

Appendices

An appendix is information not strictly necessary to the main body of the writing. It may contain a reference section for the reader, extra matter that is tangentially related or a summary of the raw data or details of the method behind the work. The body of the text must be complete without the appendices. Appendices must be referred to in the body of the text, for example, 'details of the questionnaire are given in Appendix 1 (Page 12)'.

In Advanced Higher Modern Studies, appendices are beneficial to the overall dissertation since this is where items such as reference materials, copies of letters/emails sent and received, questionnaires/surveys carried out, interview questions and answers, description, justification and evaluation of research methods can be found. *All these contribute to the*

overall 10 marks available for Introduction. The best practice is where all of the above are included in the appendices. It is disconcerting to read a dissertation and to look in the Appendices for an interview that is mentioned and to find no evidence of it. This damages the candidate as it must be presumed that the interview might not have taken place. There must be full evidence of the survey (e.g. questions, sample information, answers) in the appendices as well as analysis of the findings in the body of the dissertation. Appendices are not included in the maximum 5000 word count for the dissertation.

Each Appendix should be identified by a Roman numeral in sequence, e.g., Appendix I, Appendix II or by letters of the alphabet e.g. Appendix A, Appendix B.

Each appendix should contain different material.

Proof Reading The Dissertation

The proof reader is expected to spot the following problems:

- ◆ confusing punctuation
- ◆ spelling mistakes
- ◆ non-standard grammar
- ◆ inconsistent house style
- ◆ discrepancies such as mixed metaphors
- ◆ factual errors
- ◆ repetition

The proof reading of the dissertation is best done by the candidate **and** by someone else who has some knowledge of the dissertation.

Legibility

For Advanced Higher Modern Studies dissertation, the following are preferred:

- ◆ type size 12
- ◆ double line spacing
- ◆ easy to read font such as Arial or Times New Roman.

Final presentation

To summarise:

- preferred size 12 type font and double line spacing
- title page with:
 - Candidate name
 - Candidate number
 - Centre name
 - Centre number
 - Title of dissertation
 - Hypothesis
- contents page with page numbers for each section of the dissertation
- page numbers on all pages
- word counts at the end of each page and overall
- introduction
- main body of analysis and synthesis with sub conclusions and references throughout
- overall conclusions

- bibliography
- appendices: Appendix I (or A): description, justification and evaluation of research methods
- other appendices with research evidence etc

Improving Performance in Essays and Research Methods

Advanced Higher Modern Studies Paper 1

An externally set and assessed question paper lasting three hours, worth 90 marks.

In the external paper, candidates should answer on one of the three study themes. Each theme will have one question set on each of the four component contexts, each worth 30 marks; candidates should answer two questions. In addition, candidates are required to answer two questions, each worth 15 marks and comprising a series of short and/or extended response items on research methods. There will be no choice of question on research methods within each Study Theme.

Essays on Study Theme contexts

Both essays and the two research methods questions must be from the same Study Theme.

Common problems with the essay answers

Question as set is not answered. Candidates answer what they think the question should be, often a pre-prepared answer such as "Does prison work?" Rather than "To what extent is prison a 'costly waste of time'?" Candidates should read the question carefully; break it down into its component parts and then plan an answer. Features of poor answers are:

- ◆ they are not planned
- ◆ they lack structure
- ◆ they are too descriptive
- ◆ there is little analysis and synthesis
- ◆ there is lack of argument/balance
- ◆ specific and relevant exemplification is lacking
- ◆ quotes are rarely used
- ◆ referencing/acknowledgement of examples is rare
- ◆ lack of depth and detail in the conclusions
- ◆ conclusions that do not address the question set
- ◆ lack of any conclusions.

Excellent essay answers will address all of the above and:

- ◆ structure their answers with a focused introduction, analysis, synthesis and conclusions that directly related to the question set
- ◆ analyse the issue in depth and ensure that all sides of the argument are covered. There does not have to the same number of arguments for and against
- ◆ use relevant and current exemplification
- ◆ use appropriate quotations, for example, from academics
- ◆ compare and contrast the UK (including Scotland) with the USA in Comparative Politics essays
- ◆ stick to the time limit of one hour suggested for each essay

- ◆ develop conclusions that directly relate to the question set and attempt to reach a decision based on the evidence in their essay.

The section on dissertation advice includes relevant information on how to improve performance in essay writing at Advanced Higher Modern Studies. Writing chapters for the dissertation is a very similar process to writing an essay.

How much to write?

The suggested time per essay in the exam is one hour. In that time, many candidates can write 10/11 high quality pages. It is very important that candidates get as much practice as possible before the final exam and, indeed, before they sit a preliminary exam.

Example of a Comparative Politics essay

2008 Context A: Functions of Political Parties

To what extent is the era of two-party domination in politics over?

Answer in relation to the UK(including Scotland) and the USA

Here is the introduction from a candidate to this essay:

"From 1964 -2004, the Democrats and the Republicans have enjoyed at least 80% of the overall vote, with today, only one member of the Congress being from a third party; in Britain, at Westminster, the two major parties have enjoyed the majority of the seats with, in 2001, the total of minor parties' seats only making up a fifth of the total House of Commons. In both countries, issues such as catch-all ideology, media, funding, the voting system and class dealignment have meant that minor parties have found it difficult to break through the two party system but, in recent years, perhaps more in Britain, with the introduction of devolution, minor parties are certainly growing in power."

Comment: This is a candidate who has planned their answer in that they state in the introduction the five main issues to address in his answer: catch-all ideology, media, funding, the voting system and class dealignment. These issues then become 5 distinct parts to the essay – an excellent structure that has been planned and spelt out to the reader in the introductory paragraph. The candidate continues in a very structured manner.

"One of the first reasons to address is the catch-all ideologies of the two major partiesSince 1997, New Labour has moved more to the centre abandoning what might have been seen as its working class roots, retaining Conservative low taxation and opting for partnership in private finance and public services while maintaining the minimum wage and the family tax credit mean they attract people from all kinds of social backgrounds....."

In America, we can see a similar pattern with parties being very similar in ideology....."

However, saying this, such catch-all ideologies mean that electors have little choice and many thus opt for third parties who offer alternatives. We can see this reflected in the Scottish Parliament in 2003 with the Greens and SSP and, in the USA, with 19% of the vote given to Perot in 1996."

Comment: This section was approximately 420 words (2+ pages of handwriting in the exam script booklet). Again, an excellent structure to the argument. Addresses UK and then compares with USA. Exemplification is relevant and detailed and the candidate does quote some political analysts such as John Curtice. Uses appropriate academic terminology eg pro-segregationalist; New Democrat model; compassionate conservatives. The essay continues in this vein and does not let up with the high level of argument, detail and exemplification. It goes on for 11 pages in the exam script booklet.

This essay was awarded 30/30 and the examiner's comments were as follows:

Structure

Introduction is sophisticated

Essay then follows the structure as set out in the introduction

Integrates UK and USA with some style.

Exemplification

Very well exemplified and shows excellent knowledge and understanding of both UK and USA

Candidate makes subtle references to analysts such as John Curtice to back up points

Analysis/synthesis

Some sophisticated balanced analysis and synthesis e.g. a clever discussion of funding and a consideration of the 'Catch 22' problem faced by American parties.

Conclusion

Question is well addressed from the introduction to the end with sophisticated conclusions drawn throughout.

Overall comment

A very clever and readable essay achieving 30/30.

Examples of a range of essays are available in the Understanding Standards section of the SQA website - www.understandingstandards.org.uk

Preliminary exams

Candidates should get plenty of practice in essay writing prior to the prelim exam. The prelim is used to produce an estimate of performance so the essays should be of as high quality as possible. Candidates who are on the borderline, as a result of the prelim, will need extra practice in how to write an essay that will give them a pass in the final exam. It is also worth ensuring that those candidates put maximum effort into their dissertations since this could be the difference between a pass and a fail. Candidates who have passed Higher Modern Studies should find writing Advanced Higher essays reasonably straightforward since the strategy is similar. The big difference is that the amount of time available to write the essay is now one hour (and not 22 minutes!). When it comes to appeals or absentee awards, the evidence presented by the centre on behalf of the candidate must be robust. The strongest evidence comes from a prelim which replicates the SQA final exam; the time limit should be the same; there must be marking instructions; cut-off scores are essential; marking must be of an appropriate standard. Further advice can be found in the document *Estimates, Absentees and Assessment Appeals* published each year and available on the SQA website.

Research methods

Candidates should examine case studies to illustrate the operation, advantages and disadvantages of political and social science research methods.

The research methods which should be studied are:

- ◆ methods of observation; participant and non-participant observation; covert and overt observation
- ◆ in-depth interviewing methods: focus groups, structured and unstructured interviews
- ◆ surveys and questionnaires: sampling; postal questionnaires; telephone questionnaires; internet-based surveys; opinion polls
- ◆ official statistics; methods of presentation and analysis

Examples of case studies through which research methods could be studied vary slightly for each Study Theme so check the course descriptor for details.

For example for the European Union, examples of case studies through which research methods could be studied include:

- ◆ opinion polls on attitudes towards and within the EU
- ◆ studies into the correlations between attitudes towards the EU and various factors such as age, gender, social class, geographical location
- ◆ influence of the media on the decision making process in the EU
- ◆ analysis of media for evidence of bias.

All the research methods listed in the Arrangements document for Advanced Higher Modern Studies should be covered in detail. Candidates should know, in depth, the advantages and disadvantages of each of them and be able to compare and contrast one research method with another eg the advantages of postal surveys compared with telephone surveys.

Case studies/examples are crucial. Too often candidates lose marks because they have not given real and detailed examples in their answer. For example, the EU course descriptor specifies “opinion polls on attitudes towards and within the EU.” This means that the candidates should have a good knowledge of what opinion polls there are and what might be good/bad about them i.e. are they biased? To what extent are they valid and reliable?

Candidates should also be aware of the ethical issues concerning research, the principles involved in sampling and the importance of objectivity, the relevance and application of basic statistical techniques, and be familiar with the terminology involved (i.e. mean/median/mode; reliability; validity; correlating data/comparing trends and patterns; significance). Where appropriate, the relevance of new technology should be emphasised.

This section of the course descriptor is often ignored but it is crucial to the understanding of social science research and as such there are, generally, questions set on these areas. There have been recent questions on ethics and sampling. Reliability and validity are important terms for the candidates to understand. Several of the research methods questions require the candidate to define these words and then to judge sources such as opinion polls using these terms.

Research methods questions are worth a total of 30 marks – a third of the written paper and yet a number of candidates are ill prepared for this section of the paper. Approximately a fifth of the teaching time should be devoted to research methods. It should, ideally, be integrated into teaching and learning and not be seen to be a separate unit of work. The practical aspects

of research that a candidate uses in the dissertation can be transferred to the exam questions. For example, most candidates will look at opinion polls when they are researching their dissertation topic so they should be familiar with opinion poll organisations such as Ipsos MORI and YOUNGOV. They will know about sample size and how the information is collected. All this can then be used in a research methods question that asks a candidate “To what extent can valid and reliable conclusions be drawn from the source?” The source could be an opinion poll. Check recent past papers to see the types of questions that can be asked. Research Methods questions will be assessed as set in the Course descriptor:

“In addition, candidates are required to answer two questions, each worth 15 marks and comprising a series of short and/or extended-response items on research methods. There will be no choice of question on research methods within each Study Theme.”

In general, the Research Methods questions are marked by giving up to 3 marks for a well developed point. A common fault is that candidates just list advantages of a method and give no detail or exemplification. This cannot be awarded full marks.