

12 November 2007

To: SQA Co-ordinators (secondary schools
and further education colleges)
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

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

SQA website

The subject page is the main source of information on National Qualifications in Modern Studies. It contains the current and past reports of Principal Assessors and the Senior Verifier, Course specifications/Arrangements documents (including Access 3 Social Subjects) and specimen papers, previous National Qualifications updates and marking instructions for the 2007 and recent diets. The address of the website is www.sqa.org.uk. On the homepage select 'National Qualifications', then 'Modern Studies' on the subject drop-down menu, then select 'GO'.

CPD event for Higher Modern Studies

A Continuous Professional Development Workshop, focusing on paper 1 particularly, will be held in the Caledonian University, Glasgow on Saturday 17 November 2007, starting at 10.00am and finishing at 3.30pm sharp. Details of costs and online booking forms are on the website (www.sqa.org.uk/pdws).

Course materials checklists

These summary guides to the location and purpose of essential Course documentation are to be posted on the website. They are the first port of call for any subject queries.

Learning and teaching materials

Support materials are commissioned by LTScotland. All comments and queries regarding support materials should be addressed to Abi Robertson (0141-282 5128 or a.robertson@LTScotland.org.uk).

Update on the 2007 diet

Principal Assessors and their examining teams are warmly thanked for their efforts in delivering another successful diet. The full reports of the Principal Assessors are on our website. These are an invaluable source of advice and good practice. Centre staff are urged most strongly to avail themselves of the information contained there.

Centres are reminded that all areas of the syllabus may be sampled. Sampling ensures that candidates cover the content adequately. Hence there are no areas that will be examined every year. Centres should bear this in mind when preparing candidates.

Further points to bear in mind for each level are:

Advanced Higher

This is the last year of present Arrangements. In order that centres may prepare timeously for the introduction of the new Course in session 2008/09, the revised Arrangements, along with the specimen question paper and its associated marking instructions and Course Assessment specification are posted on the subject page of the website. Three National Assessment Bank items are available via SQA Co-ordinators.

Flyleafs and notes for the submission of candidates' Dissertation are now available only via SQA Co-ordinators. Where centres wish confirmation of the validity of titles not on this list, such proposals must be submitted to the Scottish Qualifications Authority via the Dissertation mail-box (dissertation@sqa.org.uk) by 1 November. If you have any queries relating to Dissertation topic titles please contact: Maureen McLeod (tel: 0131-271 6752, or e-mail: maureen.mcleod@sqa.org.uk)

Advice to centres on how to improve performance at Advanced Higher will be posted on the website. It is a distillation of advice in previous PA reports with additional tips and hints.

A revised list of Dissertation titles is under preparation and will be posted on the website in time for the 2008/09 diet.

Higher

Results in the revised Course were very encouraging, with several candidates attaining full marks. Nevertheless, some concerns remain and in order to support centres further, SQA will:

1. Hold a CPD event on 17 November in Glasgow (see above)
2. Revise the Understanding Standards section of the main SQA website
3. Post advice on delivering Higher and improving performance on the website.

The stem 'To what extent...' proved problematic, as the negative is tautological, eg the ways in which a factor does not influence an issue. For 2008 stems such as 'Assess the

impact...’ will be used, clarifying the demand to candidates, whereby they can examine the impact of other factors. SQA will review this after the 2008 diet.

Intermediate

Advice on improving performance at Intermediate, similar to that for Advanced Higher, will be posted on the website.

Standard Grade

The Russian option (Syllabus Area 3B) has been discontinued and will not appear in the 2009 examination or thereafter.

Access 3

Three NABs are now available for each of the Study Themes developed in the Cluster award at Access 3 in Modern Studies. (See also under ‘Verification’ below.)

SQA will automatically award an Access 3 Course to candidates who have failed the external assessment of the corresponding Course at Intermediate 1 but have met the Unit requirements of the Intermediate 1 Course. This applies to Modern Studies as the current component Units at Intermediate 1 and Access 3 are hierarchical.

To be eligible for this award of an Access 3, candidates must meet the following criteria:

- ◆ passes in all the required internally-assessed Units at Intermediate 1
- ◆ a result of 8 or 9 for the Intermediate 1 external assessment
- ◆ all Unit passes under the revised Arrangements; passes obtained prior to 2007 are not eligible

Verification (formerly moderation)

The report of the Senior Verifier is available from the subject page of the website. It gives 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.

Centres should use the latest version of any NAB available at the time of assessment. For revised or new qualifications, centres should use complete fresh NABs for re-assessments, rather than allowing candidates to amend a previous effort. Hence, fresh assessments should be used at Access 3, Intermediate and Higher. For Advanced Higher, best practice is to use a fresh NAB, but revisits in Political and Social Issues will be accepted for one last year until this revised Course is introduced next session.

The National Assessment Bank

New NABs are issued in electronic form only and can be downloaded only by SQA Coordinators. Further details are available from:

Customer Contact Centre
Scottish Qualifications Authority
The Optima Building
58 Robertson Street
Glasgow, G2 8DQ

Tel: 0845 279 1000 or Fax: 0845 213 5000

E-mail: customer@sqa.org.uk

Specimen question papers

Revised specimen question papers for all NQ levels (ie Intermediate 1 and 2, Higher and Advanced Higher), along with their associated Course Assessment specifications, are now on the website. These define the parameters of the Course Assessments. As all except the Higher one were based on the 2006 'live' papers, centres are reminded that neither the specimen question paper nor the 2006 papers should be used when compiling appeals evidence.

Past papers

Past papers can be obtained via the Customer Contact Centre on the payment of a small fee.

Terminology

The recent change of name from the Scottish Executive to the Scottish Government will be accommodated in the 2008 examination papers by referring to the Scottish Government*, with a footnote: '* formerly known as the Scottish Executive'. NABs will be updated in time for the start of the 2008/09 session.

Markers

SQA is again grateful to those who marked in the 2007 diet. It is generally recognised that marking for SQA is the best in-service there is, and it is a major factor in promoting improved performance in individual centres.

Invitations to mark for the 2008 diet are currently being 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 our website or from Evelyn Dorans in our Appointments section on 0131-561 6709 (or evelyn.dorans@sqa.org.uk).

Estimates and Appeals

The updated *Guidance on Estimates, Absentees and Assessment Appeals* is now available on our website. Two hard copies of the document have been issued to every centre. This advice was reinforced in my letter to centres of 10 April 2007.

In particular, centres should heed the advice given where split prelims are administered. The difficulty level should be adjusted accordingly, the most straightforward method being by raising the cut-off scores. Centres must also indicate on each part of a candidate's evidence the exact date (dd/mm/yy) on which it was produced. Prelim papers should also carry a date.

When generating Estimates and compiling evidence for Absentee consideration and Appeals, centres should also refer to the documents listed in the 2006 newsletter.

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

If you wish further clarification of any points in this letter, please contact either Duncan Cox (0845 213 5498; duncan.cox@sqa.org.uk) or myself at the above address.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Larry Cheyne". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'L' and 'C'.

Larry Cheyne
Qualifications Manager