

Moderation Feedback - Central

Assessment Panel:

Modern Studies

Qualification area

**Subject(s) and Level(s)
included in this report**

**Modern Studies: Levels 13, 12, 11 and 10
Units D343 and D347**

Central Moderation

General comments on central moderation activity

There were few issues of reliability in this year's central event since the majority of centres had assessed their candidates at or near the appropriate standard. This consistency in Modern Studies has been noted in previous events and reflects the experience of teachers and lecturers in marking overall in the subject. Advanced Higher evidence, sampled from D347 13, showed assessment accuracy and expertise.

However, there were issues of validity and some weaknesses were identified. The moderators had to give advice on the precise application of changes to Arrangements.

Specific issues identified

Moderation Evidence

The function of moderation is to confirm the standard of assessment set by the centre and it is self-evident that the Central Event takes place at a time which reflects this. It follows that evidence samples ought to be complete by then. This means that there is evidence from all the requested candidates and that they have been awarded a 'Pass' in a unit only when they have achieved its component Learning Outcomes (LOs). If assessments appropriate to these Outcomes have not been applied then there are issues of Validity. It was in this area that the moderators had concerns this year.

Most centres were able to complete the moderation forms without difficulty and this usually reflects the availability of appropriate evidence. Others required additional data and/or a letter of clarification which was/were included in the moderation package. This practice is helpful and the moderators have encouraged it in recent years.

It is an essential part of the moderation process that the NAB items that have been used are identified clearly. This is especially important if items or their marking instructions have received minor modification.

Moderator Reports

It is gratifying that in Modern Studies evidence from most centres has been 'Accepted' in recent years. Moderators tend not to send out detailed reports to colleagues whose evidence is of the national standard. Sometimes the moderators offer helpful suggestions or compliment a centre where work is of particularly imaginative, innovative or precise nature. This was the case this year. The team appreciate that centres assist the moderation process by careful compilation of their evidence.

Most reports are now typed* but some were hand-written. The presentation was not significant and depends on a number of factors such as time, location and moderator preference.

In order to support a centre which submitted weaker than average evidence the moderators offered advice and sometimes suggested recall in a future event. This is not to be confused with non-acceptance procedures.

The 'Not Accepted' decision requires specific advice. Its accompanying report is detailed and is usually discussed by several moderators. There were several such cases this year. Centres must be fully aware that this is an unfortunate situation. It requires immediate and serious remedy since awards are placed in jeopardy. Centres will almost certainly be recalled for further moderation which might be retrospective, random or over more than one unit.

Centres finding themselves in difficulty should not wait for moderation before seeking support from the moderation team but ought to contact the QM and request a visit.

* Additional support was provided by SQA officers in this area at the Central Event. This speeded up completion of reports.

National Assessment Bank Items (The NABs)

There were a few centres that displayed difficulties and needed some guidance in Higher Unit One D34312 where evidence of LO1 and LO2 achievement is required across two Study Themes. It was in this area that most 'Not Accepted' centres were identified. This change to the Arrangements was first indicated in June 2001 and practitioners have had every opportunity to adjust their courses accordingly. Moderators expressed concerns that weaker centres might have failed to appreciate the need to teach two full Study Themes. The implications for candidate choice in the external examination were disturbing.

It is also important for centres to balance the use of 'split' NAB items against the practice and evidence needed for the external examination. Centres must observe assessment time allocation precisely in order to ensure that candidates are placed at the appropriate level.

Centres were advised to contact the SQA should they have any questions on the application of the NAB items. It is emphasised to practitioners that NAB items are made available only to presenting centres and confidentiality is a condition of their use.

Updating the NABs

Centres were alerted, in previous years, that marking instructions would have to be updated in some topics. Modification of questions is also acceptable to the moderators providing it is minor and the original N.A.B. item can be identified clearly. Most centres have applied new materials quickly and efficiently. It is important that all practitioners are aware that SQA Coordinators in their centres have access to the most recent materials, *including NAB items*, through the SQA's confidential web-site. Updated versions of NABs at Higher and Intermediate 2 will appear presently.

Visiting Moderation

Modern Studies evidence can be completed by postal, random, retrospective and/or central moderation. Development visits have taken place and this year some were offered to centres with specific difficulties. It is increasingly important for practitioners to keep abreast of changes. Those who are unaware, or who have not been made aware, that any are taking place are unable to prepare their candidates satisfactorily. The SQA website at [http:// www.sqa.org.uk](http://www.sqa.org.uk) hosts most of the basic information required. The members of the moderation team can be contacted by practitioners (via the Qualifications Manager) for advice and support.

Prior Moderation

This option is open to centres but it is rarely used in Modern Studies. Those wishing to submit items for prior moderation are advised that single assessments do not constitute complete items. Most practitioners are aware that the Decision Making Exercise in Unit D344 12 (LO3) requires a complicated and precise construction. Comprehensive marking instructions are also required.

Feedback to centres

- The standard of assessment in the majority of cases was near or at the required standard.
- Advanced Higher evidence, sampled from D347 13, showed assessment expertise.
- Most 'Not Accepted' centres this year lacked evidence across two Study Themes in Higher Unit One. Moderators expressed concerns that weaker centres might have failed to appreciate the importance of teaching two full Study Themes in Unit D343 12 and Unit D345 12.
- Development visits are available to all centres but especially to those that are 'Not Accepted'. A charge will be made for such visits.
- Practitioners are advised that new information is sent to SQA Coordinators through their SQA confidential address. Some Modern Studies NAB items require to be updated, and this is underway.
- Centres that send in evidence for moderation should identify unambiguously the assessment items that have been applied.
- Centres can seek advice from the moderation unit if clarification of instructions is required.
- Centres should be mindful of the conditions under which assessments are administered in terms of timing and confidentiality.
- Proportionate timing must apply to the delivery of 'split' NAB items.
- Retrospective moderation can take place in early autumn.