

September 2009

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
Note — 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.

Update on the 2009 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 (www.sqa.org.uk) by the end of October.

Advanced Higher

Session 2008/09 saw the introduction of the revised Course. Candidate numbers increased and responses were generally very satisfactory.

Flyleafs and notes for the submission of candidate's Dissertations are now available only via SQA Co-ordinators. When centres wish confirmation of the validity of titles not on this list, such proposals must be submitted to us via the Dissertation mail-box (dissertation@sqa.org.uk) by 1 November.

A paper containing advice to centres on how to improve performance at Advanced Higher is available on SQA's website:

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

Marked answers used in the Understanding Standards event in September 2008 are available on the Understanding Standards website:

www.understandingstandards.org.uk

Higher

Results were very encouraging with several candidates again attaining full marks. To support centres we have revised the Understanding Standards website and provided examples of marked answers to all the questions in the 2008 exam paper:

www.understandingstandards.org.uk

Two documents giving advice on delivering Higher are also available on the 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 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 SQA's website:

www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/files/ImprovingPerformanceatIntermediate2.pdf

Over the forthcoming year, material will be added to the Understanding Standards website to support teachers in the preparation of candidates in Intermediate 2 Modern Studies:

www.understandingstandards.org.uk

Standard Grade

The quality of responses from many candidates across all three papers was excellent. However, some candidates did not achieve full marks in Enquiry Skills questions as they did not make full use of the information provided or did not reach proper conclusions. At Credit, questions which examine selectivity in the use of facts require candidates to reach a conclusion over the extent of the selectivity, not just state that a point of view is wrong.

Estimates and Appeals

The updated *Guidance on Estimates, Absentees and Assessment Appeals* is available on our website.

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 are not acceptable. 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.

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, 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 report of the Senior Verifier will soon be available from the NQ Modern Studies subject page of SQA's 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 all levels.

Markers

SQA is again grateful to those who marked in the 2009 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 2010 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 SQA's website (**www.sqa.org.uk/am**).

SQA's website

The NQ Modern Studies 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

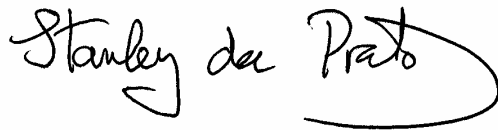
Specifications/Arrangements documents (including Access 3 Social Subjects) and specimen papers, previous National Qualifications updates and marking instructions for the 2009 and recent diets. The address of the website is www.sqa.org.uk. On the homepage, select National Qualifications, then Modern Studies from the NQ subject drop-down menu, then select GO.

Learning and teaching materials

Support materials are commissioned by LTScotland. All comments and queries regarding support materials should be addressed directly to them (tel: 08700 100 297 or e-mail: 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 7 November 2009.

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 flourish at the end of the word "Prato".

Stan da Prato
Qualifications Manager