

13 December 2011

To: SQA Co-ordinators
(Secondary Schools and Colleges of Further Education)
Directors of Education
SCIS

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 members of staff responsible for Modern Studies.

SQA Website

This is the main source of information on National Qualifications in Modern Studies. It contains the current and past External and Internal Assessment reports, Course Specifications/Arrangements documents (including Access 3 Social Subjects) and Specimen Papers, previous National Qualifications Updates and marking instructions for recent diets. The address of the website is www.sqa.org.uk. On the homepage, enter 'Modern Studies' on the 'Subject and Qualification Finder'. Thereafter select from a choice of levels within Modern Studies.

Update on the 2011 diet

Principal Assessors and their examining teams are warmly thanked for their efforts in delivering a successful diet. The External Assessment Reports are on our website and are invaluable sources of advice and good practice. Some points to highlight for each level are:

Modern Studies

Advanced Higher

There was a notable increase in candidates, from 688 in 2010 to 801 in 2011 although candidate performance fell from last year with a 2.7% drop in the A-C pass rate.

Political and Social Sciences NABs pre-dating the current versions (October 2008) have been removed from the secure site and are no longer valid.

Flyleafs and notes for the submission of candidates' Dissertations are available only on the secure part of the SQA website via SQA Co-ordinators. Where centres wish confirmation of the validity of titles not on this list, proposals must be submitted to the Scottish Qualifications Authority via the Dissertation mail-box (dissertation@sqa.org.uk).

The uplift date for candidate submissions of the Advanced Higher Dissertation is April 24 2012.

Higher

Entries increased slightly from 7,366 in 2010 to 7,673 in 2011 and the A-C pass rate remained more or less the same as in 2010.

Marker reports indicated that candidate responses included good use of contemporary exemplification and it was pleasing to note that there were a number of full mark responses for Paper 2.

Intermediate

For Intermediate 1, entries increased from 937 in 2010 to 1,062 in 2011 and for Intermediate 2, entries also increased from 3,031 in 2010 to 3,427 in 2011. In both Intermediate 1 and 2, candidate performance fell from last year with a drop of 2.7% and 7.8% respectively.

Marker reports indicated that as in Higher candidate responses, there was a good use of contemporary exemplification.

Centres are reminded that a document containing advice on Improving Performance in Intermediate 2 Modern Studies is available on the SQA website - www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/files/ImprovingPerformanceatIntermediate2.pdf

Standard Grade

Entries increased from 12,490 in 2010 to 13,337 in 2011 and the 1-6 pass rate remained more or less the same as in 2010.

It was noted that Enquiry Skills responses were good where candidates had demonstrated linkage between evidence and a specific point of view.

Estimates and Appeals

The update *Guidance on Estimates, Absentees and Appeals* for the 2012 diet is available on our website.

Centres should note the advice given about raising cut-off scores where split prelims are used. Whilst SQA past paper questions may be used in Prelims, whole question papers or sections of question papers are not acceptable. In Modern Studies 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. For the DME, the relevant NABs can be used and EV questions are provided to facilitate this.

At Advanced Higher Modern Studies centres should ensure that when using past paper questions from 2008 and before that they still meet the demands of the current arrangements. When providing candidate estimates, 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.

For Standard Grade, centres may generate their own assessment. These should indicate the provenance of items. Where past SQA items are used, these should come from a minimum of three past papers.

Where commercial papers are bought in, it is the responsibility of the centre to ensure their validity. If necessary, questions and cut-off scores should be modified. Only the current year's commercial papers are deemed secure.

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.

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

Verification

The Internal Assessment Report is available from the subject pages of the website. It gives clear and helpful advice on the verification process. When submitting evidence, 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.

Markers

SQA is again grateful to those who marked in the 2011 diet. It is generally recognised that marking for SQA provides excellent professional development, and can be a major factor in promoting improved performance in individual centres.

Invitations to mark for the 2012 diet will shortly be issued. While reserves exist at all levels in Modern Studies, 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 the SQA website.

CfE Vacancies

SQA is recruiting teaching professionals to help shape the new National Qualifications. These new teams will develop and quality assure the new assessments for the first examination diet of the new National Qualifications in 2014 and beyond. Opportunities are open to existing appointees as well as teaching professionals hoping to work with SQA for the first time. For more information please visit <http://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/47467.html>

Changes to the look of SQA's examination question papers in 2012

From 2012 all SQA's examination question papers, other than those produced to meet specific Assessment Arrangement requests, will be printed on white paper. This change has been precipitated by the increasing difficulty of sourcing specific coloured paper stock.

A further change you will see for 2012 is that acknowledgement of any copyright text extracts or graphics contained within the question paper will be listed, where applicable, on the final page of the question paper booklet. For most papers this information will be printed after the **'end of question paper'** marker, is not needed by candidates, and will have no impact on the questions themselves. In a few papers the acknowledgement will appear immediately above or below the text extract or image, as is currently the case for English and Art & Design.

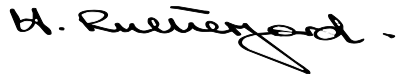
We will be alerting candidates to these changes in the 'Your Exams 2012' booklet, as well as ensuring that all Invigilators are fully briefed. We would appreciate your assistance in cascading this information within your Centre, and helping prepare candidates for these changes.

Learning and Teaching Materials

Support materials are commissioned by LTScotland. All comments and queries regarding support materials should be addressed directly to them (08700 100 297 or enquiries@LTScotland.org.uk).

If you wish further clarification on any of the above, 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, appearing to read "H. Rutherford". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline.

Hilary Rutherford
Qualifications Manager