

MODERN STUDIES
Advanced Higher

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Valid from August 2008

National Course Specification

Modern Studies (Advanced Higher)

COURSE CODE **C236 13**

COURSE STRUCTURE

This Course has two mandatory Units:

<i>FIHD 13</i>	<i>Political and Social Issues (Advanced Higher)</i>	2 credits (80 hours)
<i>FIHE 13</i>	<i>Modern Studies: Practical Research (Advanced Higher)</i>	1 credit (40 hours)

All Courses include 40 hours over and above the 120 hours for the Units. This may be used for induction, extending the range of learning and teaching approaches, support, consolidation, integration of learning and preparation for Course assessment.

RECOMMENDED ENTRY

While entry is at the discretion of the centre, candidates would normally be expected to have attained one of the following, or equivalent:

- ◆ Higher Modern Studies Course or Units
- ◆ a Course or Units at Higher in another social subject

PROGRESSION

This Course or its Units may provide progression to:

- ◆ Further or higher education courses in law or a social science
- ◆ Training or employment

CREDIT VALUE

The Advanced Higher Course in Modern Studies is allocated 32 SCQF credit points at SCQF level 7*.

**SCQF points are used to allocate credit to qualifications in the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF). Each qualification is allocated a number of SCQF credit points at an SCQF level. There are 12 SCQF levels, ranging from Access 1 to Doctorates.*

Administrative Information

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National Course Specification: (cont)

COURSE Modern Studies (Advanced Higher)

CORE SKILLS

Achievement of this Course gives automatic certification of the following:

Complete Core Skill Problem Solving at SCQF level 6

Core Skill component None

National Course Specification: Course details (cont)

COURSE Modern Studies (Advanced Higher)

RATIONALE

Advanced Higher Modern Studies is concerned with developing the candidate's knowledge and understanding, evaluative and investigative skills in relation to Modern Studies topics. Candidates will 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. This Course is suitable for candidates who wish to progress to degree courses such as Politics, Sociology, Law and/or another social science.

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 and presenting) with reference to one of the Study Themes in the syllabus. There are opportunities to use information technology within the *Advanced Higher Modern Studies* Course.

Modern Studies also contributes to personal and social development. In particular, the Course addresses the area of rights and responsibilities. This includes the rights and responsibilities of citizens in a democratic society and the moral and ethical responsibilities of individuals.

Candidates should be encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning. They should make use of generic learning skills appropriate to other Courses and the skills developed in *Advanced Higher Modern Studies* will make a contribution to learning in many other subject areas.

Advanced Higher Modern Studies makes a contribution to a well-balanced individual curriculum with appropriate emphasis given to the skills of communicating, independent learning, creative thinking and critical appreciation of the media.

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

National Course Specification: Course details (cont)

COURSE Modern Studies (Advanced Higher)

COURSE CONTENT

The Course consists of two Units: *Political and Social Issues* (Advanced Higher), and *Modern Studies: Practical Research* (Advanced Higher). Within each Unit there are three Study Themes. In each Study Theme, candidates should be aware of current trends and issues. The content of each Unit is summarised below and will be subject to sampling in the Course Assessment. The mandatory content for each Study Theme in the *Political and Social Issues* (Advanced Higher) Unit is contained in an Appendix to the Unit Specification.

F1HD 13 *Political and Social Issues Unit*

Candidates 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.

Study Theme 1: Comparative Politics and Research Methods

This Study Theme will be based on a study of the following contexts, with reference to the UK (including Scotland) and to the USA:

- ◆ Context A: Political Parties
 - A comparison of the key elements of party systems and structure.
 - A comparison of party ideology and the policy formation process.
 - A comparison of parties' handling of issues.
- ◆ Context B: Electoral Systems
 - Electoral systems: a comparison of their advantages and disadvantages.
 - A comparison of the major influences on electoral behaviour: short and long term. Main theories.
 - Trends in recent elections.
- ◆ Context C: Decision Making in Central and Devolved/State Government
 - A comparison of Executive power.
 - A comparison of the checks placed on Executive power.
 - A comparison of key issues and tensions in the decision making process.
- ◆ Context D: The Politics of Influence
 - A comparison of interest and pressure groups and their impact on the political process.
 - A comparison of the mass media and their influence on the decision making process.
 - A comparison of the controls on interest and pressure groups and the mass media.

Research Methods

In addition to the above mandatory content in relation to each context, candidates should examine case studies to illustrate the operation, advantages and disadvantages of political and social science research methods.

National Course Specification: Course details (cont)

COURSE Modern Studies (Advanced Higher)

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

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 Unit is not intended to develop in-depth competence in applying quantitative techniques to political and/or social research. There are other Units in other frameworks that would be more appropriate for that purpose.

Examples of case studies through which research methods could be studied include:

- ◆ political opinion polls
- ◆ studies into the correlations between voting behaviour and various factors such as age, gender, social class, geographical location
- ◆ influence of the media on political behaviour
- ◆ analysis of media for evidence of bias

Study Theme 2: Law and Order and Research Methods

This Study Theme will be based on a study of the following contexts:

- ◆ Context A: Rights and Responsibilities in relation to Law and Order in the UK
 - The rule of law and the values underpinning laws. The concept of rights and responsibilities in relation to law and order.
 - The nature and extent of individual human rights and liberty in relation to law and order. The impact of having rights legislation and an unwritten constitution.
 - Channels to highlight and redress grievances in relation to human rights and civil liberties.
- ◆ Context B: The Causes and Effects of Crime in the UK
 - The causes of crime with reference to the relative merits of sociological, psychological and physiological theories.
 - The relationship between crime and various social and economic factors.
 - The social and economic effects of crime on individuals, communities, businesses and public services.

National Course Specification: Course details (cont)

COURSE Modern Studies (Advanced Higher)

- ◆ Context C: Responses to Crime in the UK
 - The role and effectiveness of the police. The effectiveness of policing: accountability; technology and use of arms; responses to the needs of a multicultural society.
 - The responses of government and the main political parties (Conservative, Labour, Liberal Democrat and SNP) to crime.
 - Role and influence of the media in shaping public opinion and government policy.
- ◆ Context D: Penal Systems in the UK
 - The aims, purposes and effectiveness of the UK penal systems.
 - The alternatives to imprisonment.
 - Responses of the main political parties to the penal systems in the UK.

Research Methods

In addition to the above mandatory content in relation to each context, 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

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 (ie mean/median/mode; reliability; validity; correlating data/comparing trends and patterns; significance). Where appropriate, the relevance of new technology should be emphasised.

This Unit is not intended to develop in-depth competence in applying quantitative techniques to political and/or social research. There are other Units in other frameworks that would be more appropriate for that purpose.

Examples of case studies through which research methods could be studied include:

- ◆ reliability of official statistics
- ◆ studies into the correlations between criminal behaviour and various factors such as age, race, gender, social class, geographical location
- ◆ influence of the media on criminal behaviour
- ◆ patterns of sentencing
- ◆ effectiveness of sentencing; recidivism

Study Theme 3: The European Union and Research Methods

This Study Theme will be based on a study of the following contexts, with reference to power and representation in the European Union:

National Course Specification: Course details (cont)

COURSE Modern Studies (Advanced Higher)

- ◆ Context A: Political Relations
 - The policies of the main UK political parties towards the European Union and the UK's membership.
 - The relationship between the UK and the European Union; the European Union perspective on the UK. Areas of recent conflict between the UK and the EU: cause and effect.
 - The involvement of key European Union institutions in European Union decision making.
- ◆ Context B: Representation and Participation in the European Parliament
 - The European Parliament: structure and function. Representation of member states in the European Parliament.
 - Elections to the European Parliament: processes, results, trends and implications.
 - Influences on decision making: political groupings and divisions within the European Parliament; the influence of interest and pressure groups on the European Parliament.
- ◆ Context C: The European Union and its International Involvement
 - Economic policies: evolving relationships with economic blocs, the major world powers and the economically developing world.
 - Ongoing issues arising from enlargement: assimilation of applicant countries; economic implications of these for the EU: investment, trade and the labour market.
 - Common security and foreign policy: internal and external security and current defence issues.
- ◆ Context D: Social Developments in the European Union with reference to the UK and the EU
 - Impact of EU social legislation including welfare provision, unemployment, health and safety and consumer rights.
 - The impact of EU directives on human rights and civil liberties.
 - The impact of EU directives on the freedom of movement of capital, labour and education.

Research Methods

In addition to the above mandatory content in relation to each context, 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

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 (ie mean/median/mode; reliability; validity; correlating data/comparing trends and patterns; significance). Where appropriate, the relevance of new technology should be emphasised.

National Course Specification: Course details (cont)

COURSE Modern Studies (Advanced Higher)

This Unit is not intended to develop in-depth competence in applying quantitative techniques to political and/or social research. There are other Units in other frameworks that would be more appropriate for that purpose.

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

F1HE 13 Modern Studies: Practical Research Unit

This Unit will allow the candidate to carry out independent research on the content of a Study Theme studied in the *Political and Social Issues* (Advanced Higher) Unit. The candidate will develop the investigative skills of planning, researching, analysing and presenting.

ASSESSMENT

To achieve the Course award the candidate must achieve the Units as well as pass the Course assessment. The candidate's grade is based on the Course assessment.

Assessment objectives

The key objective of assessment is to ensure that candidates have achieved the aims of the Course. In particular, assessment seeks to ensure that candidates have understood and can apply the Course content and that they can communicate their understanding.

Unit assessments aim to ensure candidates can describe and analyse political and social issues relating to familiar and less familiar situations through the use of extended response questions and evaluating items, and can undertake and reflect on the production of a dissertation.

Course assessment aims to ensure candidates can retain knowledge and understanding and skills over a longer period of time to describe and analyse political and social issues in less familiar and more demanding contexts through the use of extended response questions, evaluating items, and the production of a dissertation.

Candidates will be required to demonstrate the ability to integrate the skills of knowledge and understanding and analysis and communicate these effectively. They should provide up-to-date exemplification of political and social issues, using appropriate terminology, presented in a coherent and logically structured way. Arguments will be supported by up-to-date evidence and analysis will be balanced and informed, showing a high level of awareness of political and social issues.

At Advanced Higher level, candidates will be able to produce detailed descriptions and in-depth analysis. Sources used will be complex.

National Course Specification: Course details (cont)

COURSE Modern Studies (Advanced Higher)

Unit assessment

The Unit assessment for the *Political and Social Issues* (Advanced Higher) Unit will be a closed-book assessment which should take place at an appropriate time. The maximum time allowed for assessment is 2 hours. The Unit assessment for the *Modern Studies: Practical Research* (Advanced Higher) Unit takes the form of a candidate checklist which should be completed during the investigative process and/or when the investigation has been completed, along with an evaluation of the process.

Each Unit is assessed against the standards set out in the *National Unit Specification: statement of standards* for each Unit. Full details of the Outcomes, Performance Criteria and Evidence Requirements may be found in the Unit Specifications.

Further details about Unit assessment for this Course can be found in the Unit Specifications and the National Assessment Bank (NAB) materials.

Course assessment

The Course Assessment will consist of the following:

- ◆ a question paper with a total allocation of 90 marks
- ◆ a dissertation with a total allocation of 45 marks

Question Paper

- ◆ the paper examines knowledge and understanding covering the content of the *Political and Social Issues* (Advanced Higher) Unit and also assesses analysis and evaluation
- ◆ some questions will require an extended response; others will require a short response
- ◆ the paper will consist of three Study Themes, each with two sections. Candidates will answer:
Study Theme 1: Comparative Politics and Research Methods **or**
Study Theme 2: Law and Order and Research Methods **or**
Study Theme 3: The European Union and Research Methods
- ◆ Section A – candidates should answer two essay questions, worth 30 marks each, from a choice of four
- ◆ Section B – there are two compulsory research methods questions worth 15 marks each

Dissertation

- ◆ the dissertation will be assessed in terms of the validity and critical appraisal of its aims, methodology, evidence and conclusions
- ◆ titles must be drawn from the content of a Study Theme studied in the *Political and Social Issues* (Advanced Higher) Unit
- ◆ a title should be a hypothesis which can be proved or disproved. An approved list of titles is available from the SQA website
- ◆ dissertations should be a maximum of 5,000 words in length, excluding headings, methodology, footnotes, bibliography and appendices
- ◆ a flat penalty of 10% of the total marks available will be deducted once the stated word limit has been exceeded

National Course Specification: Course details (cont)

COURSE Modern Studies (Advanced Higher)

Further details of the Course Assessment are given in the Course Assessment Specification and in the Specimen Question Paper.

Link between Unit and Course assessment/added value

Unit assessment requires candidates to:

- ◆ demonstrate knowledge, understanding and skills acquired in the Unit
- ◆ apply critically the knowledge, understanding and skills in one context
- ◆ plan, research and undertake a complex investigation

When completing the Course Assessment candidates have the opportunity to demonstrate the greater level of attainment appropriate for a graded Course award in *Advanced Higher Modern Studies* by:

- ◆ demonstrating the ability to retain and integrate knowledge, understanding and skills acquired in the Units over a greater period of time
- ◆ applying critically the knowledge, understanding and skills acquired in the Units to an additional context
- ◆ synthesising a large volume of complex information to produce a detailed and reasoned dissertation on the conclusions of research findings

National Course Specification: Course details (cont)

COURSE Modern Studies (Advanced Higher)

GRADE DESCRIPTIONS AT A AND C

The candidate's grade will be based on the total score obtained from the Course assessment. The descriptions below indicate the nature of achievement required for an award at Grade C and A in the Course.

For an award at Grade C candidates should	For an award at Grade A candidates should
<p>Explain political/social issues in a way that is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ relevant ◆ accurate ◆ detailed ◆ relevant in its reference to comparisons/different perspectives 	<p>Explain in depth political/social issues in a way that is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ relevant ◆ accurate ◆ detailed ◆ detailed and relevant in its reference to comparisons/different perspectives
<p>Analyse political/social issues in a way that is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ sustained ◆ balanced ◆ effective in its use of relevant ◆ exemplification 	<p>Analyse in depth political/social issues in a way that is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ sustained ◆ balanced ◆ effective in its use of relevant exemplification
<p>Describe research methods:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ clearly ◆ accurately 	<p>Describe in depth research methods:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ clearly ◆ accurately
<p>Evaluate research methods:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ accurately 	<p>Evaluate in depth research methods:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ accurately
<p>Plan and research a dissertation that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ identifies appropriate aims and methods ◆ gathers relevant and accurate information 	<p>Plan and research in depth a dissertation that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ identifies appropriate aims and methods ◆ gathers relevant and accurate information
<p>Analyse the information/data:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ accurately 	<p>Analyse in depth the information/data:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ accurately
<p>Draw developed conclusions that are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ valid ◆ relevant ◆ supported by evidence 	<p>Draw developed conclusions that are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ valid ◆ relevant ◆ detailed ◆ supported by evidence

National Course Specification: Course details (cont)

COURSE Modern Studies (Advanced Higher)

ESTIMATES AND APPEALS

Detailed advice and guidance is issued to centres in the publication *Estimates, Absentees and Assessment Appeals: Guidance on Evidence Requirements*.

Estimates

In preparing estimates, evidence must take account of performance across the Course and must be judged against the Grade Descriptions. Further advice on the preparation of estimates is given in the Course Assessment Specification.

Appeals

Evidence to support appeals for the Course must show a sufficient breadth of coverage of the content and must relate to the Course Grade Descriptions.

Candidates are required to have knowledge and understanding of and the ability to analyse and evaluate within the chosen Study Theme.

The most robust evidence will meet the following criteria:

- ◆ there should be evidence of the retention and integration of knowledge and understanding across the whole of the chosen Study Theme
- ◆ there should be evidence of the ability to apply knowledge and understanding and skills to less familiar and more demanding contexts
- ◆ there should be evidence of the ability to evaluate previously unseen sources
- ◆ the candidate should be able to demonstrate a broader knowledge and understanding of the chosen Study Theme

Evidence which meets these criteria and demonstrates the retention of knowledge and skills over a period of time is likely to come from an integrated test or prelim which reflects the requirements of the Course Assessment in demand, structure and timing.

Although a prelim is not mandatory, it can give a good indication of how a candidate will perform with the addition of time pressure and the need to apply knowledge and skills in two contexts in the Course Assessment. The instrument of assessment should reflect the structure of the Course Assessment Specification and the standards set out in the Specimen Question Paper. Centres must ensure that the instrument of assessment has not been seen previously by candidates.

The NABs for the *Political and Social Issues* (Advanced Higher) Unit of this Course on their own do not provide sufficient evidence to support an appeal since they do not provide evidence of a candidate's ability to:

- ◆ respond to questions from more than one context
- ◆ show retention of knowledge and understanding over a longer period of time
- ◆ apply skills in more demanding situations
- ◆ respond to questions without the aid of a supporting rubric

Marking schemes referring to the grade descriptions should be included with *all* evidence submitted in support of an appeal.

National Course Specification: Course details (cont)

COURSE Modern Studies (Advanced Higher)

QUALITY ASSURANCE

All National Courses are subject to external marking and/or verification. Externals Markers, visiting Examiners and Verifiers are trained by SQA to apply national standards.

The Units of all Courses are subject to internal verification and may also be chosen for external verification. This is to ensure that national standards are being applied across all subjects.

Courses may be assessed by a variety of methods. Where marking is undertaken by a trained Marker in their own time, Markers meetings are held to ensure that a consistent standard is applied. The work of all Markers is subject to scrutiny by the Principal Assessor.

To assist centres, Principal Assessor and Senior Verifier reports are published on SQA's website www.sqa.org.uk.

GUIDANCE ON LEARNING AND TEACHING APPROACHES FOR THIS COURSE

Learning throughout the *Advanced Higher Modern Studies* Course involves the study of contemporary sources including the mass media and government statistics. In addition, there is the requirement to develop candidates' understanding of research methods and the ability to analyse critically examples of research. Candidates will then be able to apply these skills in their individual research task.

The media inform and shape our understanding of the processes and issues central to the Course. Use of media-based resources should underpin candidates' learning experiences during the Course.

It is expected that throughout the Course candidates will use and challenge sources from the mass media such as documentary/current affairs TV and radio programmes. Candidates should also have access to a wide range of views through the range of Scottish and British quality newspapers, as well as articles and cartoons from journals and news magazines including, where appropriate, foreign media. They should also use a wide range of statistical data derived from government departments, surveys and, where relevant, from international organisations, their associated agencies, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and interest and pressure groups.

Learning and teaching approaches for the *Advanced Higher Modern Studies* Course rely heavily on these current sources for individualised work. There should still be opportunities for groupwork, discussion and debate, and the detailed examination of case studies and examples in written work based on knowledge and understanding, evaluation, analysis and investigative skills. Candidates should also be encouraged to reflect upon and share their experiences with one another.

While the usual sources of information may form the basis for the knowledge and understanding of the political and social content at Advanced Higher level, it is anticipated that developing candidates' expertise in research methods will require additional sources. In order to evaluate the validity and reliability of research methods, candidates will require knowledge and understanding of the research methods that are widely used in political and social science research and their advantages and disadvantages in particular research situations. An approach to the methodology of social and/or political research is included in many textbooks.

National Course Specification: Course details (cont)

COURSE Modern Studies (Advanced Higher)

In the Comparative Politics and Research Methods Study Theme, comparisons and examples from Wales and Northern Ireland are appropriate, but in the Course Assessment no question will specifically require these.

In the Law and Order and Research Methods Study Theme, international comparisons can be used to highlight particular points. This is particularly valuable in the 'Penal Systems in the UK' context. Candidates may incorporate such comparisons into their dissertations, and essay answers in the Course Assessment. No questions will specifically require international comparisons to be made in this Study Theme. Similarly, comparisons may be made between Scotland and other parts of the UK, but in the Course Assessment no question will specifically require these.

In the *Modern Studies: Practical Research* (Advanced Higher) Unit the candidate will draw on a range of different sources and methodologies used in Modern Studies. Candidates will be expected to apply the critical skills developed in the *Practical and Social Issues* (Advanced Higher) Unit to evaluate the reliability and validity of their own research methods and those of the other sources used in the research process for this Unit.

CANDIDATES WITH DISABILITIES AND/OR ADDITIONAL SUPPORT NEEDS

The additional support needs of individual candidates should be taken into account when planning learning experiences, selecting assessment instruments, or considering alternative Outcomes for this Course. Further advice can be found in the SQA document *Guidance on Assessment Arrangements for Candidates with Disabilities and/or Additional Support Needs* (www.sqa.org.uk).

National Unit Specification: general information

UNIT Political and Social Issues (Advanced Higher)

CODE F1HD 13

COURSE Modern Studies (Advanced Higher)

SUMMARY

This is a mandatory Unit in the *Advanced Higher Modern Studies* Course but it can also be studied as a freestanding Unit.

This Unit requires candidates to analyse issues using relevant data and a variety of perspectives. This Unit is also concerned with developing the candidate's research skills through the critical evaluation of social science research methods. The Unit will help the candidate to assess the validity of research findings through the context of political or social issues. This more theoretical view of the research process, in the context of Modern Studies topics, will help to enhance the candidate's own critical thinking and investigative skills.

OUTCOMES

- 1 Explain an issue from a chosen context within a chosen Study Theme.
- 2 Analyse an issue from a chosen context within a chosen Study Theme.
- 3 Evaluate the methods used and conclusions drawn in a piece of research related to a chosen Study Theme.

RECOMMENDED ENTRY

While entry is at the discretion of the centre, candidates would normally be expected to have attained one of the following, or equivalent:

- ◆ Higher Modern Studies Course or Units
- ◆ another social subject at Higher

Administrative Information

Superclass: FB

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National Unit Specification: general information (cont)

UNIT Political and Social Issues (Advanced Higher)

CREDIT VALUE

2 credits at Advanced Higher (16 SCQF credit points at SCQF level 7*)

**SCQF credit points are used to allocate credit to qualifications in the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF). Each qualification in the Framework is allocated a number of SCQF credit points at an SCQF level. There are 12 SCQF levels, ranging from Access 1 to Doctorates.*

CORE SKILLS

Achievement of this Unit gives automatic certification of the following:

Complete Core Skill	None
Core Skill component	Critical Thinking at SCQF level 6

National Unit Specification: statement of standards

UNIT Political and Social Issues (Advanced Higher)

Acceptable performance in this Unit will be the satisfactory achievement of the standards set out in this part of the Unit Specification. All sections of the statement of standards are mandatory and cannot be altered without reference to the Scottish Qualifications Authority.

OUTCOME 1

Explain an issue from a chosen context within a chosen Study Theme.

Performance Criteria

- (a) The explanation of the issue is relevant, accurate and detailed.
- (b) The explanation makes relevant reference to comparisons and different perspectives.

OUTCOME 2

Analyse an issue from a chosen context within a chosen Study Theme.

Performance Criteria

- (a) The analysis of the issue is made in a sustained and balanced way, making effective use of relevant exemplification.
- (b) A relevant and developed conclusion is reached on the issue.

OUTCOME 3

Evaluate the methods used and conclusions drawn in a piece of research related to a chosen Study Theme.

Performance Criteria

- (a) The description of the methods used is clear and accurate.
- (b) The appropriateness, validity and reliability of the methods and conclusions are accurately assessed.

National Unit Specification: statement of standards (cont)

UNIT Political and Social Issues (Advanced Higher)

EVIDENCE REQUIREMENTS FOR THIS UNIT

The Appendix to this Unit Specification details the mandatory content for this Unit.

Evidence should be written and/or recorded orally and should cover all Outcomes and Performance Criteria. Evidence should be produced under closed-book, supervised conditions within a time limit of 2 hours.

To demonstrate satisfactory attainment in Outcomes 1 and 2, the candidate should produce an extended response to a structured essay question testing the ability to explain and analyse issues relating to a chosen context.

For Outcome 3, the appropriateness, reliability and validity of research methods will be assessed through a series of restricted response questions relating to research methods.

The specified research methods 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

Candidates will critically appraise an example of research from the list below:

- ◆ written text (quality news magazine/journal; article from quality newspaper; extract from sociological journal or book)
- ◆ documentary programme on radio, television or video/DVD
- ◆ detailed statistical tables from government sources (eg Social Trends)
- ◆ detailed graphs and/or diagrams
- ◆ results of a questionnaire, survey or interview schedule

The use of a cut-off score is appropriate to this assessment. The standard to be applied, appropriate cut-off score and the breadth of coverage are illustrated in the National Assessment Bank items available for this Unit. If a centre wishes to design its own assessment for this Unit, it should be of a comparable standard.

If reassessment is required, it should consist of a different assessment instrument.

National Unit Specification: support notes

UNIT Political and Social Issues (Advanced Higher)

This part of the Unit Specification is offered as guidance. The support notes are not mandatory.

While the exact time allocated to this Unit is at the discretion of the centre, the notional design length is 80 hours.

GUIDANCE ON THE CONTENT AND CONTEXT FOR THIS UNIT

The mandatory content of the Study Themes contained in this Unit is attached as an Appendix to this Unit Specification. In addition to the mandatory content, candidates should examine case studies to illustrate the operation, advantages and disadvantages of political and social science research methods.

GUIDANCE ON LEARNING AND TEACHING APPROACHES FOR THIS UNIT

The part of the Unit dealing with research has the following aims:

- ◆ to develop skills of critical evaluation, looking at examples of research and data from within Modern Studies contexts
- ◆ to develop research skills which would support the candidate in undertaking the *Modern Studies: Practical Research* (Advanced Higher) Unit
- ◆ to develop an awareness of the ethical issues concerning research, and the problems of interpreting data and information gathered

In addition to these three aims, candidates will also acquire skills that will be of value to them in higher and further education, particularly for Courses in social studies and humanities.

The application of statistical and quantitative methods should not play a large part in this Unit, although it is anticipated that candidates will have an awareness of the problems of interpreting such methods. Modern Studies candidates will concentrate on the qualitative evaluation of data and basic skills of presentation. There are other Units in other frameworks which would allow the development of greater competence in and awareness of quantitative techniques.

GUIDANCE ON APPROACHES TO ASSESSMENT FOR THIS UNIT

Candidates are expected to produce an extended response to an essay question which requires explanation and analysis. Research methods are assessed through a series of restricted response questions.

CANDIDATES WITH DISABILITIES AND/OR ADDITIONAL SUPPORT NEEDS

The additional support needs of individual candidates should be taken into account when planning learning experiences, selecting assessment instruments, or considering alternative Outcomes for Units. Further advice can be found in the SQA document *Guidance on Assessment Arrangements for Candidates with Disabilities and/or Additional Support Needs* (www.sqa.org.uk).

National Unit Specification: statement of standards

UNIT Political and Social Issues (Advanced Higher)

Appendix

NB: This Appendix is within the statement of standards, ie the mandatory requirements of the Unit.

Study Theme 1: Comparative Politics and Research Methods

Context A: Political Parties

Descriptor	Coverage
With reference to the UK (including Scotland) and the USA:	Background: an overview of the political system of the UK (including Scotland) and the USA. (These areas will not be examined specifically but should be introduced where they aid understanding.)
A comparison of the key elements of party systems and structure.	Organisation, leadership, membership, funding and decision making. Selection of candidates. Recent changes to party structures. The impact and evolution of smaller parties at national and regional levels.
A comparison of party ideology and the policy formation process.	The development and impact of political ideologies. The policy formation process; the role of party conferences; the role of party leaders.
A comparison of parties' handling of issues.	A balanced analysis of government and opposition, majority and minority parties' handling of recent political and economic issues. Internal party tensions. Political party manifestos in relation to the comparisons above. <i>Ongoing issues and proposals for change in respect of all of the above.</i> <i>Current and relevant exemplification.</i>

National Unit Specification: statement of standards

UNIT Political and Social Issues (Advanced Higher)

Appendix

NB: This Appendix is within the statement of standards, ie the mandatory requirements of the Unit.

Study Theme 1: Comparative Politics and Research Methods

Context B: Electoral Systems

Descriptor	Coverage
<p>With reference to the UK (including Scotland) and the USA:</p> <p>Electoral systems: a comparison of their advantages and disadvantages.</p> <p>A comparison of the major influences on electoral behaviour: short and long term. Main theories.</p> <p>Trends in recent elections.</p>	<p>Background: an overview of the political system of the UK (including Scotland) and the USA. (These areas will not be examined specifically but should be introduced where they aid understanding.)</p> <p>A comparison and analysis of the advantages and disadvantages of electoral systems used in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ UK – First Past the Post ◆ Scotland – Additional Members System ◆ Scottish local government – Single Transferable Vote ◆ Senate and the House of Representatives – First Past the Post ◆ Presidential – Electoral College <p>The impact of electoral systems on political representation, social representation, the balance of power and participation.</p> <p>Theoretical approaches to, and models of, voting behaviour.</p> <p>Key themes: social class and dealignment, party affiliation and dealignment, age, gender, ethnicity, religion, issues, leadership and personality, location and apathy. The relative importance of these.</p> <p>Interrelationship between electoral systems and electoral behaviour and campaigning.</p> <p>The role of the media and its impact on electoral behaviour. The impact of opinion polls on electoral behaviour. Voter expectations and voting behaviour. Tactical voting.</p> <p>Trends in recent elections: the relative and changing importance of all factors.</p> <p><i>Ongoing issues and proposals for change in respect of all of the above.</i></p> <p><i>Current and relevant exemplification.</i></p>

National Unit Specification: statement of standards

UNIT Political and Social Issues (Advanced Higher)

Appendix

NB: This Appendix is within the statement of standards, ie the mandatory requirements of the Unit.

Study Theme 1: Comparative Politics and Research Methods

Context C: Decision Making in Central and Devolved/State Government

Descriptor	Coverage
<p>With reference to the UK (including Scotland) and the USA:</p> <p>A comparison of Executive power.</p> <p>A comparison of the checks placed on Executive power.</p> <p>A comparison of key issues and tensions in the decision making process.</p>	<p>Background: an overview of the political system of the UK (including Scotland) and the USA. (These areas will not be examined specifically but should be introduced where they aid understanding.)</p> <p>The power of Executives.</p> <p>Prime Minister, President, First Minister: appointment, role and powers. Style and personality of the individual. The composition and constitutional roles of cabinets. Key personnel in cabinet office.</p> <p>The role of MPs, MSPs, Members of the House of Lords, Senators and Members of Congress. The role of government and opposition, the legislative process and the role of committees.</p> <p>Whip systems and party discipline.</p> <p>The roles of the UK judiciary and the US Supreme Court.</p> <p>Separation of powers.</p> <p>Written and unwritten constitutions.</p> <p>The rights of individuals and the needs of the state.</p> <p>The relationships between central and devolved governments in the UK, and federal and state governments in the USA.</p> <p>The role of the civil service and bureaucracy.</p> <p><i>Ongoing issues and proposals for change in respect of all of the above.</i></p> <p><i>Current and relevant exemplification.</i></p>

National Unit Specification: statement of standards

UNIT Political and Social Issues (Advanced Higher)

Appendix

NB: This Appendix is within the statement of standards, ie the mandatory requirements of the Unit.

Study Theme 1: Comparative Politics and Research Methods

Context D: The Politics of Influence

Descriptor	Coverage
<p>With reference to the UK (including Scotland) and the USA:</p> <p>A comparison of interest and pressure groups and their impact on the political process.</p> <p>A comparison of the mass media and their influence on the decision making process.</p> <p>A comparison of the controls on interest and pressure groups and the mass media.</p>	<p>Background: an overview of the political system of the UK (including Scotland) and the USA. (These areas will not be examined specifically but should be introduced where they aid understanding.)</p> <p>The types, roles, methods, successes and failures of interest and pressure groups. The distinction between interest and pressure groups and political parties.</p> <p>Insider groups, outsider groups, sectional groups and their respective methods.</p> <p>Cause groups (often termed promotional groups in the USA).</p> <p>Access points for interest and pressure groups.</p> <p>Interest and pressure groups as an enhancement or threat to the democratic process.</p> <p>The mass media: types, role, methods, successes and failures; implications for the democratic process.</p> <p>The interaction between the media, government, other political parties and interest and pressure groups.</p> <p>Implications of new media formats.</p> <p>Emergence of media conglomerates.</p> <p>The controls on the mass media, interest and pressure groups: legal limits, financial regulation, censorship, accountability.</p> <p>Reaction of the state to extreme interest and pressure groups. The role of MI5, Special Branch, FBI and CIA.</p> <p><i>Ongoing issues and proposals for change in respect of all of the above.</i></p> <p><i>Current and relevant exemplification.</i></p>

National Unit Specification: statement of standards

UNIT Political and Social Issues (Advanced Higher)

Appendix

NB: This Appendix is within the statement of standards, ie the mandatory requirements of the Unit.

Study Theme 2: Law and Order and Research Methods

Context A: Rights and Responsibilities in relation to Law and Order in the UK

Descriptor	Coverage
<p>The rule of law and the values underpinning laws. The concept of rights and responsibilities in relation to law and order.</p> <p>The nature and extent of individual human rights and liberty in relation to law and order. The impact of having rights legislation and an unwritten constitution.</p> <p>Channels to highlight and redress grievances in relation to human rights and civil liberties.</p>	<p>Background: overview of the legal, judicial and penal systems of the UK, with special reference to the distinct Scottish system. (These areas will not be examined specifically but should be introduced where they aid understanding.)</p> <p>Definition of the rule of law; the values underpinning the legal and judicial framework. Different interpretations of, and challenges to, the rule of law. Conflicts between rights and responsibilities in relation to the individual and society.</p> <p>Human rights and civil liberties as they apply to the UK; enhancements and limitations of these rights and freedoms.</p> <p>European and international legislation which impacts upon the UK: European Convention on Human Rights; UN Declaration of Human Rights.</p> <p>Arguments for and against a written constitution and Bill of Rights in the UK.</p> <p>Channels available to highlight grievances:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ interest and pressure groups◆ the media <p>The effectiveness of channels available to redress grievances within the Scottish and British judicial systems in relation to human rights and civil liberties.</p> <p>The impact of the European Court of Human Rights.</p> <p><i>Ongoing issues and proposals for change in respect of all of the above.</i></p> <p><i>Current and relevant exemplification.</i></p>

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UNIT Political and Social Issues (Advanced Higher)

Appendix

NB: This Appendix is within the statement of standards, ie the mandatory requirements of the Unit.

Study Theme 2: Law and Order and Research Methods

Context B: The Causes and Effects of Crime in the UK

Descriptor	Coverage
<p>The causes of crime with reference to the relative merits of sociological, psychological and physiological theories.</p> <p>The relationship between crime and various social and economic factors.</p> <p>The social and economic effects of crime on individuals, communities, businesses and public services.</p>	<p>Background: overview of the legal, judicial and penal systems of the UK, with special reference to the distinct Scottish system. (These areas will not be examined specifically but should be introduced where they aid understanding.)</p> <p>The main causes of crime as explained and defined within physiological, psychological and sociological theories; the relative merits of differing theories.</p> <p>The relationship and links between crime and social and economic factors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ socialisation ◆ social class ◆ poverty and affluence ◆ alcohol and/or substance abuse ◆ gender ◆ ethnicity ◆ location <p>The social and economic costs and effects of crime on different groups and aspects of society:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ the effects on individuals as perpetrators and victims ◆ the effects on groups in society: the elderly, young people, social classes, genders, ethnic groups ◆ the effects of crime on different communities: affluent and less affluent, rural and urban ◆ the effects of crime on businesses, the private sector, public services and taxpayers <p><i>Ongoing issues and proposals for change in respect of all of the above.</i></p> <p><i>Current and relevant exemplification.</i></p>

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UNIT Political and Social Issues (Advanced Higher)

Appendix

NB: This Appendix is within the statement of standards, ie the mandatory requirements of the Unit.

Study Theme 2: Law and Order and Research Methods

Context C: Responses to Crime in the UK

Descriptor	Coverage
<p>The role and effectiveness of the police. The effectiveness of policing: accountability; technology and use of arms; responses to the needs of a multicultural society.</p> <p>The responses of government and the main political parties (Conservative, Labour, Liberal Democrat and SNP) to crime.</p> <p>Role and influence of the media in shaping public opinion and government policy.</p>	<p>Background: overview of the legal, judicial and penal systems of the UK, with special reference to the distinct Scottish system. (These areas will not be examined specifically but should be introduced where they aid understanding.)</p> <p>The role of the police in UK society: prevention of crime, maintenance of law and order, detection of crime and protection of the public.</p> <p>The effectiveness of policing in the UK. Measurement of performance. Channels of accountability. The effectiveness of controls.</p> <p>Issues surrounding the use of technology in the fight against crime in the UK; the debate surrounding the use of arms in the police force. Attempts by the police to meet the needs of a multicultural society.</p> <p>Current government policy and initiatives in relation to crime in the UK (with particular reference to Scotland); policies relating to law and order of the main opposition parties (UK and Scotland); the reaction of opposition parties to current government actions in relation to law and order.</p> <p>The ways in which the broadcast media raise awareness and influence public perception and government policy in relation to crime; the importance of opinion polls in shaping law and order policy; media bias and its consequences in relation to shaping party policies on law and order.</p> <p><i>Ongoing issues and proposals for change in respect of all of the above.</i></p> <p><i>Current and relevant exemplification.</i></p>

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UNIT Political and Social Issues (Advanced Higher)

Appendix

NB: This Appendix is within the statement of standards, ie the mandatory requirements of the Unit.

Study Theme 2: Law and Order and Research Methods

Context D: Penal Systems in the UK

Descriptor	Coverage
The aims, purposes and effectiveness of the UK penal systems.	<p>Background: overview of the legal, judicial and penal systems of the UK, with special reference to the distinct Scottish system. (These areas will not be examined specifically but should be introduced where they aid understanding.)</p> <p>The role of the penal systems.</p> <p>The purposes of incarceration: protection, punishment, rehabilitation and deterrence.</p> <p>The aims of the prison services in the UK. Current challenges encountered by the prison services in the UK; the role of private prisons; the extent to which the aims are currently met.</p>
The alternatives to imprisonment.	<p>The effectiveness of alternatives to custody:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ community sentencing ◆ use of technology ◆ restorative justice ◆ financial penalties ◆ Children’s Hearings
Responses of the main political parties to the penal systems in the UK.	<p>Current government policy and initiatives in relation to the penal systems in the UK (with particular reference to Scotland); policies of the main opposition parties (UK and Scotland) relating to the penal systems; the reaction of opposition parties to current government actions in relation to the penal systems.</p> <p><i>Ongoing issues and proposals for change in respect of all of the above.</i></p> <p><i>Current and relevant exemplification.</i></p>

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UNIT Political and Social Issues (Advanced Higher)

Appendix

NB: This Appendix is within the statement of standards, ie the mandatory requirements of the Unit.

Study Theme 3: The European Union and Research Methods

Context A: Political Relations

Descriptor	Coverage
The policies of the main UK political parties towards the European Union and the UK's membership.	<p>Background: the growth of the EU, its aims, organisation, operation and institutions. Key treaties. (These areas will not be examined specifically but should be introduced where they aid understanding.)</p> <p>The policies of the main parties in the UK towards the EU and the UK's membership of the EU (Labour, Conservative, Liberal Democrat, nationalist and emergent parties). Debate within and between parties over the relationship between the UK and the EU.</p>
The relationship between the UK and the European Union; the European Union perspective on the UK. Areas of recent conflict between the UK and the EU: cause and effect.	<p>The tensions between the EU as a supragovernmental body and the national and international interests of the UK; UK relationships outwith the EU. Debates over federalism, subsidiarity and sovereignty.</p> <p>The Scottish dimension of the UK's relationship with the EU.</p> <p>The political resolution of economic and constitutional issues and conflicts of national interest.</p>
The involvement of key European Union institutions in European Union decision making.	<p>The relationship between, and relative power of, the following in EU decision making:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Council of Ministers ◆ European Parliament ◆ European Commission ◆ European Council ◆ The European Court of Justice ◆ Inter-Governmental Conferences and Summit Meetings ◆ Key Committees: the Economic and Social Committee, the Committee of the Regions <p><i>Ongoing issues and proposals for change in respect of all of the above.</i></p> <p><i>Current and relevant exemplification.</i></p>

National Unit Specification: statement of standards

UNIT Political and Social Issues (Advanced Higher)

Appendix

NB: This Appendix is within the statement of standards, ie the mandatory requirements of the Unit.

Study Theme 3: The European Union and Research Methods

Context B: Representation and Participation in the European Parliament

Descriptor	Coverage
<p>The European Parliament: structure and function. Representation of member states in the European Parliament.</p> <p>Elections to the European Parliament: processes, results, trends and implications.</p> <p>Influences on decision making: political groupings and divisions within the European Parliament; the influence of interest and pressure groups on the European Parliament.</p>	<p>Background: the growth of the EU, its aims, organisation, operation and institutions. Key treaties. (These areas will not be examined specifically but should be introduced where they aid understanding.)</p> <p>The structure of the European Parliament: President, members, Brussels, Strasbourg, constituencies, committees, delegations, Secretariat.</p> <p>Seat allocations between member states; changing balances of power.</p> <p>The processes involved in elections to the European Parliament in the UK and other member states.</p> <p>Trends in recent European Parliament elections: successes and failures of groupings; UK results and comparisons with other EU countries.</p> <p>Turnout: trends in the UK and other European countries; explanations for turnout trends. The democratic deficit; gender mainstreaming. Degrees of popular participation in the EU; causes and explanations of varying rates of participation.</p> <p>Political groupings: variety, common ideology, trends in membership of groupings; role and membership of UK parties. Relative influence of groupings.</p> <p>Influence of interest and pressure groups: lobbying.</p> <p><i>Ongoing issues and proposals for change in respect of all of the above.</i></p> <p><i>Current and relevant exemplification.</i></p>

National Unit Specification: statement of standards

UNIT Political and Social Issues (Advanced Higher)

Appendix

NB: This Appendix is within the statement of standards, ie the mandatory requirements of the Unit.

Study Theme 3: The European Union and Research Methods

Context C: The European Union and its International Involvement

Descriptor	Coverage
<p>Economic policies: evolving relationships with economic blocs, the major world powers and the economically developing world.</p> <p>Ongoing issues arising from enlargement: assimilation of applicant countries; economic implications of these for the EU: investment, trade and the labour market.</p> <p>Common security and foreign policy: internal and external security and current defence issues.</p>	<p>Background: the growth of the EU, its aims, organisation, operation and institutions. Key treaties. (These areas will not be examined specifically but should be introduced where they aid understanding.)</p> <p>The EU as an economic bloc. Relationships with China, Japan and the Far East, the USA and Russia; relationships with economically developing world; WTO agreements.</p> <p>Progress in joint policy initiatives; internal and external factors impinging upon:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Single Currency: progress, problems. UK position ◆ Common Transport Policy: environmental and climatic concerns ◆ energy transition policies <p>Economic impact of the assimilation of applicant countries: funding developments, opportunities for investment, trading opportunities, labour migration, labour costs and skills. Political impact of enlargement: conflict and cooperation between nations.</p> <p>Effectiveness of EU response to issues of security:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ internal: responses to threat of terrorism, border controls, asylum seekers and refugees, cooperation between states ◆ external: EU Security and Defence Policy, European Action Plan, Rapid Reaction Force <p>Relations with NATO, UN and the USA.</p> <p><i>Ongoing issues and proposals for change in respect of all of the above.</i></p> <p><i>Current and relevant exemplification.</i></p>

National Unit Specification: statement of standards

UNIT Political and Social Issues (Advanced Higher)

Appendix

NB: This Appendix is within the statement of standards, ie the mandatory requirements of the Unit.

Study Theme 3: The European Union and Research Methods

Context D: Social Developments in the European Union with reference to the UK and the EU

Descriptor	Coverage
<p>Impact of EU social legislation including welfare provision, unemployment, health and safety and consumer rights.</p> <p>The impact of EU directives on human rights and civil liberties.</p> <p>The impact of EU directives on the freedom of movement of capital, labour and education.</p>	<p>Background: the growth of the EU, its aims, organisation, operation and institutions. Key treaties. (These areas will not be examined specifically but should be introduced where they aid understanding.)</p> <p>EU policies and issues of harmonisation relating to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ welfare provision ◆ employment ◆ health and safety ◆ consumer rights <p>Role of European Court of Justice; European Charter on Human Rights.</p> <p>Attempts to deal with discrimination in relation to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ gender ◆ ethnicity ◆ age ◆ religion ◆ disability <p>The impact of directives in relation to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ capital: investment opportunities, effects on member states ◆ labour: impact of migration on labour markets, reasons for and problems created ◆ education: transferability of qualifications; educational and cultural exchanges <p><i>Ongoing issues and proposals for change in respect of all of the above.</i></p> <p><i>Current and relevant exemplification.</i></p>

National Unit Specification: general information

UNIT Modern Studies: Practical Research (Advanced Higher)

CODE F1HE 13

COURSE Modern Studies (Advanced Higher)

SUMMARY

This is a mandatory Unit in the *Advanced Higher Modern Studies* Course but it can also be studied as a freestanding Unit.

This Unit will allow the candidate to carry out independent research based on the *Political and Social Issues* (Advanced Higher) Unit in Modern Studies. The candidate will develop further the investigative skills of planning, research, analysis and presenting evidence that form an integral part of the *Advanced Higher Modern Studies* Course.

OUTCOMES

- 1 Plan and organise practical research into a complex issue in Modern Studies.
- 2 Evaluate the learning gained through the process of practical research.

RECOMMENDED ENTRY

While entry is at the discretion of the centre, candidates would normally be expected to have attained one of the following, or equivalent:

- ◆ Higher Modern Studies Course or Units
- ◆ another social subject at Higher

CREDIT VALUE

1 credit at Advanced Higher (8 SCQF credit points at SCQF level 7*)

**SCQF credit points are used to allocate credit to qualifications in the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF). Each qualification in the Framework is allocated a number of SCQF credit points at an SCQF level. There are 12 SCQF levels, ranging from Access 1 to Doctorates.*

Administrative Information

Superclass: FB

Publication date: May 2007

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National Unit Specification: general information (cont)

UNIT Modern Studies: Practical Research (Advanced Higher)

CORE SKILLS

Achievement of this Unit gives automatic certification of the following:

Complete Core Skill	Problem Solving at SCQF level 6
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Core Skill component	None
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National Unit Specification: statement of standards

UNIT Modern Studies: Practical Research (Advanced Higher)

Acceptable performance in this Unit will be the satisfactory achievement of the standards set out in this part of the Unit Specification. All sections of the statement of standards are mandatory and cannot be altered without reference to the Scottish Qualifications Authority.

OUTCOME 1

Plan and organise practical research into a complex issue in Modern Studies.

Performance Criteria

- (a) The plan identifies a hypothesis, appropriate aims and methodology, having taken into account a number of variables and factors.
- (b) A wide range of sources are identified and used.
- (c) The information obtained is organised to carry out the task and test the hypothesis.

OUTCOME 2

Evaluate the learning gained through the process of practical research.

Performance Criteria

- (a) The information gathered is analysed accurately and the conclusions drawn are valid, relevant and supported with evidence in terms of the aims of the investigation.
- (b) Alternative methodologies are considered and the strategy modified as necessary.
- (c) The process of researching is reviewed and the appropriateness, validity and reliability of the methodology used are accurately assessed.
- (d) Recommendations are made on the process of practical research.

National Unit Specification: statement of standards (cont)

UNIT Modern Studies: Practical Research (Advanced Higher)

EVIDENCE REQUIREMENTS FOR THIS UNIT

Evidence should be written and/or recorded orally and should cover all Outcomes and Performance Criteria.

To demonstrate satisfactory attainment of all Outcomes and Performance Criteria, the candidate should complete a checklist and a set of restricted response items, which the assessor confirms by observation and discussion, drawing on evidence of the process held within the portfolio. These should cover:

- ◆ Planning
- ◆ Researching
- ◆ Organising
- ◆ Analysing
- ◆ Reviewing
- ◆ Evaluating
- ◆ Making recommendations

The standard to be applied and the breadth of coverage are illustrated in the National Assessment Bank item available for this Unit. If a centre wishes to design its own assessment for this Unit, it should be of a comparable standard.

Satisfactory evidence will demonstrate that the issue addressed is complex with a number of factors and/or variables taken into account when the strategy is developed and the approach justified.. Relationships and causation may be indirect and comprise several concurrent strands. Conclusions should take into account not only the range of evidence obtained, but also its validity and reliability.

The candidate's review of the process of practical research will take into account the lessons learned for undertaking a similar piece of research in the future.

National Unit Specification: support notes

UNIT Modern Studies: Practical Research (Advanced Higher)

This part of the Unit Specification is offered as guidance. The support notes are not mandatory.

While the exact time allocated to this Unit is at the discretion of the centre, the notional design length is 40 hours.

GUIDANCE ON THE CONTENT AND CONTEXT FOR THIS UNIT

The candidate should choose an issue from the Study Theme undertaken in the *Advanced Higher Modern Studies* Course as the basis for investigation. A full description of the content is set out in the Appendix to the *Political and Social Issues* (Advanced Higher) Unit.

GUIDANCE ON LEARNING AND TEACHING APPROACHES FOR THIS UNIT

Candidates should ensure that the issue chosen for undertaking practical research is within the content of the *Political and Social Issues* (Advanced Higher) Unit. This may require teacher/lecturer guidance. Within that framework, the candidate is responsible for defining the scope of the practical research in terms of aims, methodology and resources and developing and justifying an approach to deal with the issue. Candidates may need to review and modify their strategy as they carry out the process. Resources should be appropriate to the task. The candidate should research and select data from a variety of secondary sources. Relevant political and sociological theories may be considered and, where employed, be integrated into the subsequent stages of the research. It is good practice to undertake primary research, but this should be appropriate to the issue investigated. Both quantitative and qualitative data should be used as appropriate. In all instances candidate should manage their research prudently in terms of time and resources. This may involve the common planning and allocation of tasks with others but in all instances the research is the responsibility of the individual candidate. The role of the teacher/lecturer is to act as a mentor, and to monitor the work of each candidate.

Towards the end of the research process, candidates should organise evidence gathered to date to test their hypothesis. The completeness of the evidence should be identified and any gaps addressed. Alongside this process candidates should draft their conclusions taking into account evidence which supports their hypothesis and also that which does not. As part of the re-drafting process, conclusions may be modified to accommodate evidence researched subsequently as part of the reviewing process.

As part of the process of carrying out practical research, candidates should review progress regularly and adjust their plan as necessary. This may also involve adjusting aims as well as methodology, and considering alternative strategies. These should be discussed with the teacher/lecturer and recorded. As part of these discussions on the learning gained on the research process, candidates and teachers/lecturers should agree on recommendations for undertaking research in the future.

Knowledge and skills acquired in the *Political and Social Issues* (Advanced Higher) Unit will prove useful to candidates undertaking this Unit.

National Unit Specification: support notes (cont)

UNIT Modern Studies: Practical Research (Advanced Higher)

GUIDANCE ON APPROACHES TO ASSESSMENT FOR THIS UNIT

This Unit requires the candidate to undertake a piece of practical research. This will lead to the production of a dissertation which is not itself assessed in the Unit assessment, but forms part of the Course Assessment. The Unit assessment focuses on the processes involved in planning, undertaking and reviewing a major piece of research such as a dissertation. Outcome 2 requires that the candidate uses evidence from the process of investigating to support their review of the process with a view to making recommendations about undertaking such a piece of practical research.

Evidence for this Unit will be collated in the form of candidate checklists, which will be based on interviews which will confirm to the assessor that each part of the process has been undertaken successfully. These will be supported by restricted response items.

CANDIDATES WITH DISABILITIES AND/OR ADDITIONAL SUPPORT NEEDS

The additional support needs of individual candidates should be taken into account when planning learning experiences, selecting assessment instruments, or considering alternative Outcomes for Units. Further advice can be found in the SQA document *Guidance on Assessment Arrangements for Candidates with Disabilities and/or Additional Support Needs* (www.sqa.org.uk).