



Advanced Higher Modern Studies

Approved list of dissertations

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Introduction

This list of titles applies to the project–dissertation for Advanced Higher Modern Studies. The titles list is neither final nor definitive but is designed to exemplify suitable questions/hypothesis.

If centres wish to present dissertation titles which are not listed in this document, they may submit their proposed titles to SQA by 1 November. Further details are available on the [Modern Studies page of SQA's website](#). This service is advisory in nature.

There is no need for centres to seek approval for titles which merely refine the issue in some way.

Study theme 1: Political issues

Area of study A: Power and influence

Interest groups and their impact on the political process

Lobbying corrupts the political process.

Interest groups exert a positive influence on the democratic process.

Outsider groups exert greater influence than insider groups.

Direct action is a legitimate course of action.

Direct action is a threat to the values of democracy.

Interest groups have more significant influence in the USA than the UK.

When it comes to interest groups, size is all that matters.

Media and its influence on the political process

The media plays a key role in the political process.

An independent media is necessary for democracy.

Public service broadcasting ensures a politically impartial media.

Concentrated media ownership damages democracy.

The influence of newspapers has declined in line with their circulation.

Social media is the most influential media format on elections.

Television is still king when it comes to influencing elections and voting behaviour.

The influence of social media on politics is over-exaggerated.

A political leader's greatest ally is the media.

Radical political movements have grown via social media online communities.

Social media is an echo chamber which only reinforces already-held political views.

Political parties and elections

Parties who adapt their ideological positions remain relevant.

Pragmatism is the defining feature of parties of government.

The Conservative Party has abandoned compassionate conservatism.

Third parties are ineffective and act only as a protest vote.

Third parties exert a disproportionate influence.

Single-issue parties have limited success.

The two-party system is under threat.

The SNP are the natural party of governance in Scotland.

Political parties are inherently undemocratic.

Political parties are increasingly dominated by their leaders.

Grassroots members of political parties have limited influence.

Political parties are a dying breed in the twenty-first century.

FPTP has no place in a modern democracy.

FPTP is a safeguard against tyranny of the majority.

PR systems are fairer and more representative of the will of the people.

Electronic voting would address the issue of low voter turnout.

Compulsory voting is necessary to legitimise election outcomes.

Age is now the key factor in determining voting outcomes.

Leadership is the most important factor in the electoral success of political parties.

Social class remains the key influence in determining voting behaviour.

The key issue in elections is the economy.

Area of study B: Living political ideas

Political theories, thoughts and ideas

Liberty and equality are not compatible.

Inequality is the price of a strong, economic liberal democracy.

States that prioritise individual freedom above equality prosper.

There is no such thing as society, only individuals.

The interests of the state override the rights of the individual.

Citizens' rights are inalienable.

The relationship between political ideas and ideologies

In the contemporary world there is no place for ideology.

Recent economic events have seen a resurgence in the ideas of Socialism/Marxism.

Liberalism has undergone a resurgence in recent years.

Liberalism is not compatible with political parties or systems that are socially and morally conservative.

Conservatism shares more similarities than differences with Liberalism.

Conservatism has stolen the values of nationalism and dressed them up as patriotism.

Marxism is a failed ideology.

Scottish nationalism is civic in nature.

Ethnic nationalism is the basis of modern nationalist parties.

The contemporary relevance of political ideas

Neo-liberal ideas now dominate politics.

Individualism has triumphed over collectivism in the realm of political ideas.

Economic events have led to a resurgence of socialist ideas and political parties.

Right-wing think tanks are more influential than their left-wing counterparts.

A smaller state means more freedom and choice.

The age of political consensus is over — we have returned to a period of political polarisation.

The Scottish Government's belief in a collectivist welfare state is unaffordable and unsustainable.

Feminism's influence within political parties has increased in the 21st century.

The influence of the alt-right and their ideas is exaggerated.

Environmentalism has had little influence on mainstream politics.

Area of study C: Political structures

Constitutions and political systems

A codified constitution is preferable to an uncodified constitution.

The original intent of the United States Constitution is no longer fit for purpose.

Unicameral parliamentary systems are more democratic.

Bicameral systems provide greater scrutiny of government.

A federated UK is the best way to maintain the Union.

Federalism is the best system of governing socially diverse, densely populated states.

Devolution threatens the union.

Committee oversight is more powerful in the US than in the UK system of government.

Branches of government and their influence in the political process

Legislative power trumps that of the executive.

The legislative and judicial branches of government find it difficult to check or block the power of the executive.

Powers of the judiciary are limited but effective

The US President is imperial.

The UK Prime Minister is presidential.

The powers of the UK Prime Minister are the envy of the American President.

The Chairman of the Chinese Communist Party (CPC) is all-powerful.

Relationships between levels of government

The powers granted to the Scottish Parliament are insufficient.

The Scottish independence referendum settled relations between Scotland and the rest of the UK.

Relationships between Federal government and US State governments are adversarial by nature.

Brexit will not mean an end to relations between the UK and EU.

Study theme 2: Social issues, law and order

Area of study A: Understanding the criminal justice system

Individual human rights and liberty in relation to criminal justice

The European Convention on Human Rights is not suited to the UK.

A British Bill of Rights would benefit the UK and/or Scotland.

Civil liberties are under threat from the war on terrorism.

Human rights threaten national security.

Security legislation has reduced UK citizens' human rights.

Defining Guantanamo Bay inmates as 'unlawful combatants' violates international law.

The Russian Government's treatment of political opposition contravenes international human rights.

Government treatment of asylum seekers infringes their human rights.

The media's coverage of crime creates moral panic.

An irrational fear of crime is fed by the media.

Judicial framework

Scotland's court system is efficient and effective in dealing with crime and criminality.

The effectiveness of the court system is undermined by government guidelines on sentencing.

Abolishing the principle of 'double-jeopardy' will increase miscarriages of justice.

The UK is a police state.

Scotland's children hearing system is uniquely effective in dealing with youth criminal justice.

The UK Supreme Court is more effective than its US counterpart.

Current criminal justice issues

Extending the powers of the police and security services protects national security.

Anti-terror strategies undermine the rule of law.

If you have nothing to hide you have nothing to fear from modern surveillance techniques.

Biometric identity cards should be compulsory.

The 'not proven' verdict has no place in a modern Scottish criminal justice system.

The requirement for corroboration in Scottish criminal court cases should be dropped.

Legal Aid changes deny justice to all but the rich.

Criminal justice discriminates against young males.

Women receive special treatment from the chivalrous criminal justice system.

UK laws endanger sex workers.

Current UK laws regarding prostitution are doing more harm than good to UK society.

All are equal under the law.

Criminal justice is inherently racist.

The creation of Police Scotland has been an unmitigated failure.

CCTV has been the key factor in reductions in crime.

Cuts to police budgets will lead to increases in crime across the UK.

Responses to cybercrime are 'too little, too late'.

UK police officers should routinely carry guns.

Armed police undermine the principle of policing by consent.

Area of study B: Understanding criminal behaviour

The nature and extent of criminal behaviour

All crime is deviant, but not all deviance is criminal.

Middle class crime is permissible while the crimes of the poorest are punishable.

Crime statistics cannot be trusted.

Public perceptions of crime are irrational.

Crime plays a positive role in society.

All crime is structural in nature.

Crime does not exist.

Evaluation of theories of criminal behaviour

Criminals are born that way.

Society creates criminals.

Society prepares the crime, criminals commit them.

Social deprivation and crime are inextricably linked.

Violent crime is in the genes.

Sexual violence against women is a consequence of misogynistic attitudes within society.

Masculinity and violent crime are inextricably linked.

Crime increases in a consumerist society.

Poor parenting is the cause of youth criminality.

Disrupted families produce delinquent children.

Science is the key to understanding criminal behaviour.

Feminist theories fail to explain causes of crime.

The social and economic effects of criminal behaviour

Crime affects the elderly more than any other group.

The poorest pay the cost of crime.

Being young, black and male is a prison sentence from birth.

The real cost of crime is paid by young men.

Crime is concentrated in areas of deprivation.

White-collar crime is more damaging to society.

The middle-classes are insulated from the worst aspects of crime.

Female criminality is more damaging to society.

Racism is thriving.

Fear of crime is irrational and misplaced.

Area of study C: Responses by society to crime

Theories and explanations of responses to crime

Prisons are too focused on punishment to succeed.

Protecting the public should be the first and only priority of any penal system.

Crime prevention is more effective than punishment.

Capital punishment is a legitimate response to crime.

More laws mean less order.

Rehabilitation is revolutionising criminal justice.

Zero tolerance does not deter crime.

Moral panics have created ineffective law and order policy.

Current responses to crime and evaluation of responses to crime

Prison works.

Prison is a costly waste of time.

Prisons are universities of crime.

Short-term prison sentences are counter-productive in reducing crime

Prisons in Scotland get an unfair press.

Radicalisation is increasing in UK prisons.

Restorative justice fails to tackle crime.

Rehabilitation is the way to lower recidivism rates.

Purposeful activity reduces re-offending.

Only serious crime warrants a prison sentence.

Alternatives to prison jeopardise public safety.

Criminalising drug-related offences is ineffective.

Women should not be sent to prison.

Gender should not be a factor when it comes to crime and punishment.

Only men should go to prison.

Scotland must rethink its approach to tackling youth crime.

The human rights of prisoners are not being met.

Prisons fails to meet the mental health needs of prisoners.

The Scottish prison system lets down its most vulnerable inmates.

Capital punishment is ineffective.

Stop and search powers of the police require reform.

Racial profiling is controversial but necessary.

Police relations with ethnic minorities are broken.

The police are institutionally racist.

The case for gun control in the USA is irrefutable.

The Scottish prison system lags behind global comparators.

Study theme 3: Social issues, social inequality

Area of study A: Understanding social inequality

The nature and extent of social inequality

Social inequality cannot be measured by income alone.

Child poverty in the UK is exaggerated.

Eradicating child poverty is an unachievable goal.

All poverty is relative.

Social mobility is a thing of the past.

All inequality is structural in nature.

Inequality is beneficial and necessary.

Theories and explanations of inequality

Poverty is a consequence of individual choice.

Attitudes of the poor trap them in poverty.

Wage differences between the highest and lowest earners cannot be justified.

Hierarchical societies are more prosperous.

The UK class system reinforces socio-economic inequality.

Globalisation has reduced inequality.

Trade liberalisation reinforces economic inequality.

Scarcity of resources is the cause of global inequalities.

Private education perpetuates inequality.

Evaluation of theories and explanations of social inequality

Marx's critique of capitalism is more relevant in the 21st century than ever.

All history is the history of class struggle.

Marx and Weber have more in common than differences.

Society cannot function without inequality.

Area of study B: Impact of inequality

The social and economic impact of inequality

Inequality has a negative impact for all society.

The effects of inequality are felt most by women.

The most damaging impact of inequality is on health.

Individuals born into it find it impossible to escape the vicious cycle of poverty.

Poor children become poor adults.

The children of families who experience divorce are more likely to experience poverty and social exclusion.

The elderly are ill-equipped to deal with inequality.

Communities with the greatest poverty suffer poorer public services.

The white working classes in the USA are as likely to be victims of poverty and inequality as ethnic minorities.

The social and economic impact of inequality on aspects of society

Unequal societies have the greatest social problems.

Health and inequality are inextricably linked.

Poverty pushes the poor into crime.

The gig economy is increasing poverty and inequality.

The UK housing market only creates social divisions within society.

Zero hours contracts bring no benefits to employees.

Area of study C: Responses to social inequality

Theories and explanations of responses to social inequality

The social democratic model is the most effective approach to tackling poverty and inequality.

'Trickle-down' economics increase inequality.

Free markets are the most effective way to lift people out of poverty.

Liberal welfare systems are unsustainable.

Current responses and evaluation of responses to social inequality

Universal benefits create a more equal society.

Austerity extends poverty and inequality.

Privatisation of public services reinforces inequality.

Privately run welfare programmes have been a success.

Reform is needed to tackle welfare dependency.

Free/private schools promote social mobility.

Comprehensive education has failed.

Housing policies widen the inequality gap.

The state cannot solve poverty and inequality.

Equality of opportunity rather than equality is more effective in reducing inequality.

Redistributive taxation is the only way to address inequality.