



Higher  
Course  
Specification



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# Higher Modern Studies Course Specification (C749 76)

**Valid from August 2014**

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Please refer to the note of changes at the end of this Course Specification for details of changes from previous version (where applicable).

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## Course outline

**Course title:** Higher Modern Studies

**SCQF:** level 6 (24 SCQF credit points)

**Course code:** C749 76

### Mandatory Units

**H23C 76 Democracy in Scotland and the United Kingdom (Higher)\*\***  
6 SCQF credit points

**H23F 76 Social Issues in the United Kingdom (Higher)**  
6 SCQF credit points

Or

**H6NB 76 Social Issues in the United Kingdom  
with a Scottish Context (Higher)\*** 6 SCQF credit points

**H23G 76 International Issues (Higher)** 6 SCQF credit points

**Course assessment** 6 SCQF credit points

This Course includes six SCQF credit points to allow additional time for preparation for Course assessment. The Course assessment covers the added value of the Course. Further information on the Course assessment is provided in the Assessment section.

\*Scottish Studies Award contributing Unit: This Course Specification should be read in conjunction with the relevant Scottish Studies Unit Specification on the [Scottish Studies Award web page](#)

\*\* Scottish Studies Award contributing Unit

### Recommended entry

Entry to this Course is at the discretion of the centre. However, learners would normally be expected to have attained the skills, knowledge and understanding required by the following or equivalent qualifications and/or experience:

- ◆ National 5 Modern Studies Course or relevant component Units

### Progression

This Course or its Units may provide progression to:

- ◆ Advanced Higher Modern Studies Course or its component Units
- ◆ further study, employment and/or training

Further details are provided in the Rationale section.

### Equality and inclusion

This Course Specification has been designed to ensure that there are no unnecessary barriers to learning or assessment. The individual needs of learners

should be taken into account when planning learning experiences, selecting assessment methods or considering alternative evidence. For further information, please refer to the *Course Support Notes* and the *Course Assessment Specification*.

## **Rationale**

All new and revised National Courses reflect Curriculum for Excellence values, purposes and principles. They offer flexibility, provide more time for learning, more focus on skills and applying learning, and scope for personalisation and choice.

In this Course, and its component Units, there will be an emphasis on skills development and the application of those skills. Assessment approaches will be proportionate, fit for purpose and will promote best practice, enabling learners to achieve the highest standards they can.

This Course provides learners with opportunities to continue to acquire and develop the attributes and capabilities of the four capacities as well as skills for learning, skills for life and skills for work.

All Courses provide opportunities for learners to develop breadth, challenge and application, but the focus and balance of the assessment will be appropriate for the subject area.

## **Relationship between the Course and Curriculum for Excellence values, purposes and principles**

The Modern Studies Course builds upon the principles and practices for the social studies curriculum area.

The Modern Studies Course will encourage learners to develop important attitudes including: an open mind and respect for the values, beliefs and cultures of others; openness to new thinking and ideas and a sense of responsibility and global citizenship.

This Course develops in learners a greater understanding of the contemporary world and their place in it. By studying this Course, learners are enabled to develop the four capacities in many respects. For example, learners' horizons are extended and they are challenged to look at the world in new ways. Their confidence grows as they begin to understand more about their sense of identity and place in the contemporary world. Learners will build up a framework of social, political and economic knowledge and understanding which will help them develop a sense of responsible citizenship.

The investigative and critical thinking activities in this Course give learners important experience in contributing to group work and also working on their own. Learners will acquire attributes which will be important for their life and work. Through the skills and content of this Course, learners will develop an increased understanding of the democratic political system and their place in it as well as a sense of responsible citizenship. The emphasis on the evaluation of a wide range of sources and decision making will develop thinking skills. Learners will also progressively develop skills in literacy through using and presenting information in a variety of ways; and skills in numeracy through the evaluation of numerical and graphical information.

## **Purpose and aims of the Course**

Modern Studies opens up the world of contemporary society for learners.

The purpose of Modern Studies is to develop the learner's knowledge and understanding of contemporary political and social issues in local, Scottish, United Kingdom and international contexts. In these contexts, learners will develop an awareness of the social and political issues they will meet in their lives. This purpose will be achieved through successful study of the three Units.

Through this Course, learners will undertake a coherent study of contemporary society with concepts and themes being revisited and built upon across Units. The Course will develop the skills to help learners interpret and participate in the social and political processes they will encounter now and in the future.

Modern Studies makes a distinctive contribution to the curriculum by drawing on the social sciences of politics, sociology and economics and where appropriate, of associated ideas drawn from other social subjects. It thereby adopts a multi-disciplinary approach.

The main aims of Modern Studies are to enable learners to develop:

- ◆ a range of research, analytical and evaluating skills
- ◆ understanding of the democratic process and complex political issues
- ◆ understanding of complex social and economic issues at local, Scottish, national and international levels and ways of addressing needs and inequalities
- ◆ understanding of different views about the extent of state involvement in society
- ◆ understanding of the nature and processes of conflict resolution
- ◆ understanding of the importance of human and legal rights and responsibilities and their application in different societies

## **Information about typical learners who might do the Course**

This Course is appropriate for a wide range of learners, from those who wish to achieve an understanding of contemporary society and their place in it, to learners who wish to progress to more specialised training or further education or employment.

Entry to this Course is at the discretion of the centre. However, it may be beneficial for learners to have the skills and knowledge required by the National 5 Modern Studies Course or equivalent qualifications.

Through the successful completion of this Course learners will develop a range of important and transferable skills including: researching, understanding and using a wide range of evidence on contemporary issues; evaluating, analysing and synthesising evidence in order to detect and explain the degree of objectivity; making and justifying decisions and drawing conclusions with supporting evidence; constructing complex arguments in a balanced and structured way; and communicating, by a variety of means, views, opinions, decisions and conclusions based on evidence.

Modern Studies Units and Courses are offered from SCQF level 3 to SCQF level 7. Vertical progression is possible through the levels of Modern Studies qualifications and lateral progression is possible to other qualifications in the Social Studies suite of Courses.

The Higher Modern Studies Course provides an entry qualification for study in further and higher education and for entry into a diverse range of occupations and careers.

# Course structure and conditions of award

## Course structure

This Course develops a range of cognitive skills. It encourages active learning in the process of developing an understanding of contemporary society. Learners will acquire and apply relevant knowledge. By using a range of sources of information, they will develop investigating, evaluating and analysing skills in order to understand and explain political, social and international issues.

By undertaking this Course, learners will develop a wide range of important and transferable skills, including researching, understanding and using a wide range of evidence on contemporary issues; evaluating, analysing and synthesising evidence in order to: detect and explain the degree of objectivity; making and justifying decisions and drawing conclusions with supporting evidence; constructing complex arguments in a balanced and structured way; and communicating, by a variety of means, views, opinions, decisions and conclusions based on evidence.

The skills listed above will be developed and applied over a range of political, social and international contexts in the following Units. Each Unit also offers opportunities for learners to focus on particular skills.

This Course has three mandatory Units. Within each Unit there is a considerable degree of flexibility in themes which can be studied to allow personalisation and choice.

Units are statements of standards for assessment and not programmes of learning and teaching. They can be delivered in a number of ways.

The principles above will be applied in the Units below:

### **Modern Studies: Democracy in Scotland and the United Kingdom (Higher)**

In this Unit, learners will use a range of written, numerical and graphical sources of information in order to detect and explain the degree of objectivity in contemporary Scottish and UK political contexts. Learners will draw on knowledge and understanding of democracy in Scotland and the United Kingdom.

Learners will study topics such as: the United Kingdom constitutional arrangement including the role of the Scottish Parliament and other devolved bodies and the impact of UK membership of the European Union; the study of representative democracy; voting systems and their impact; the impact of a range of factors which affect voting behaviour; and the ways in which citizens are informed about, participate in, and influence the political process.

### **Modern Studies: Social Issues in the United Kingdom (Higher)**

In this Unit, learners will use a range of written, numerical and graphical sources of information in order to make and justify decisions about social issues. Learners will draw on knowledge and understanding of social issues within the United Kingdom and Scotland.

Learners have a choice of social issue: contexts for study will focus on **either** social inequality **or** crime and the law. In the social inequality context, learners will focus on a contemporary aspect of social inequality in the UK and the impact on a group in society. They will focus on topics such as the nature of social inequality; theories and causes of inequality; the impact of inequality; and the attempts to tackle inequality and their effectiveness. In the crime and the law context, learners will focus on topics such as the role of law in society; theories and causes of crime; the impact of crime; and methods of tackling crime and their effectiveness.

### **Modern Studies: International Issues (Higher)**

In this Unit, learners will use a range of written, numerical and graphical sources of information in order to draw and support conclusions in international contexts. Learners will draw on knowledge and understanding of international issues.

Learners have a choice of international issue: contexts for study will focus on **either** a political and socio-economic study of a major world power **or** the study of a significant contemporary world issue. The study of a world power will focus on a study of its political system and processes, recent socio-economic issues, effectiveness of the government in tackling a socio-economic issue and its role in international relations. The study of a world issue will focus on a significant recent issue or conflict which has a regional or global impact. The study of the issue will focus on causes of the issue, the consequences of the issue on those areas directly involved as well as its global impact, the role of international organisations in attempts to resolve the issue and the effectiveness of international organisations in their attempts to resolve the issue.

### **Conditions of award**

To gain the award of the Course, the learner must pass all the Units as well as the Course assessment. The required Units are shown in the Course outline section. Course assessment will provide the basis for grading attainment in the Course award.

## Skills, knowledge and understanding

Further information on assessment of skills, knowledge and understanding for the Course is given in the *Course Assessment Specification*. A broad overview of the mandatory subject skills, knowledge and understanding that will be covered in the Course is given in this section.

This covers:

- ◆ developing and applying skills, knowledge and understanding across political, social and international contexts
- ◆ analysing, evaluating and synthesising a wide range of evidence which may be written, numerical and graphical to detect and explain the degree of objectivity in political contexts which may be familiar or unfamiliar
- ◆ researching, analysing, evaluating and synthesising a wide range of evidence which may be written, numerical and graphical to make and justify decisions in social contexts which may be familiar or unfamiliar
- ◆ evaluating, analysing and synthesising a wide range of evidence which may be written, numerical and graphical to draw and support conclusions in international contexts which may be familiar or unfamiliar
- ◆ developing and applying factual and theoretical knowledge and understanding, giving detailed explanations and analysis of the democratic processes, institutions and organisations which make up political life in Scotland and the United Kingdom
- ◆ developing and applying factual and theoretical knowledge and understanding and giving detailed explanations and analysis of a major social issue in the United Kingdom focusing on either social inequality or crime and the law
- ◆ developing and applying factual and theoretical knowledge and understanding and giving detailed explanations and analysis of an international issue focusing on either a political and socio-economic study of a major world power or a contemporary world issue

Skills, knowledge and understanding to be included in the Course will be appropriate to the SCQF level of the Course. The SCQF level descriptors give further information on characteristics and expected performance at each SCQF level ([www.sqa.org.uk/scqf](http://www.sqa.org.uk/scqf)).

# Assessment

Information about assessment for the Course is included in the *Course Assessment Specification* which provides full details including advice on how a learner's overall attainment for the Course will be determined.

## Unit assessment

All Units are internally assessed against the requirements shown in the *Unit Specifications*.

They can be assessed on a Unit-by-Unit basis or by combined assessment.

They will be assessed on a pass/fail basis within centres. SQA will provide rigorous external quality assurance, including external verification, to ensure assessment judgements are consistent and meet national standards.

The assessment of the Units in this Course will be as follows:

### **Modern Studies: Democracy in Scotland and the United Kingdom (Higher)**

In this Unit, the learner will be required to give evidence of the ability to:

- ◆ use a range of sources of information to detect and explain the degree of objectivity in contexts relating to democracy in the Scottish and United Kingdom political systems
- ◆ draw on factual and theoretical knowledge and understanding of democracy in the Scottish and United Kingdom political systems

### **Modern Studies: Social Issues in the United Kingdom (Higher)**

In this Unit, the learner will be required to give evidence of the ability to:

- ◆ research and use a range of sources of information to make and justify decisions about social issues in the United Kingdom, focusing on either social inequality or crime and the law
- ◆ draw on factual and theoretical knowledge and understanding of social issues in the United Kingdom, focusing on either social inequality or crime and the law

### **Modern Studies: International Issues (Higher)**

In this Unit, the learner will be required to give evidence of the ability to:

- ◆ use a range of sources of information to draw and support conclusions about international issues, focusing on either a major world power or a significant world issue
- ◆ draw on factual and theoretical knowledge and understanding of international issues, focusing on either a major world power or a significant world issue

## Course assessment

Courses from National 4 to Advanced Higher include assessment of added value<sup>1</sup>. At National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher, the added value will be assessed in the Course assessment. The added value for the Course must address the key purposes and aims of the Course as defined in the Course Rationale. It will do this by addressing one or more of breadth, challenge or application.

In the Higher Modern Studies Course, added value will focus on:

- ◆ breadth
- ◆ challenge
- ◆ application

The learner will draw on, extend and apply the skills, knowledge and understanding they have acquired during the Course. This will be assessed by a question paper and an assignment<sup>2</sup>. The question paper<sup>3</sup> will require demonstration of a breadth of skills, knowledge and understanding from across the Course. The assignment will require learners to extend and apply their skills, knowledge and understanding and will be sufficiently open and flexible to allow for personalisation and choice.

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<sup>1</sup> Definitions can be found here: <http://www.sqa.org.uk/jargonbuster>

<sup>2</sup> See link above for definition

<sup>3</sup> See link above for definition

# Development of skills for learning, skills for life and skills for work

It is expected that learners will develop broad, generic skills through this Course. The skills that learners will be expected to improve on and develop through the Course are based on SQA's *Skills Framework: Skills for Learning, Skills for Life and Skills for Work* and drawn from the main skills areas listed below. These must be built into the Course where there are appropriate opportunities.

## **1 Literacy**

- 1.1 Reading
- 1.2 Writing

## **2 Numeracy**

- 2.3 Information handling

## **4 Employability, enterprise and citizenship**

- 4.6 Citizenship

## **5 Thinking skills**

- 5.3 Applying
- 5.4 Analysing and evaluating

Amplification of these skills is given in SQA's *Skills Framework: Skills for Learning, Skills for Life and Skills for Work*. The level of these skills will be appropriate to the level of the Course. Further information on building in skills for learning, skills for life and skills for work for the Course is given in the *Course Support Notes*.

# Administrative information

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## History of changes to National Course Specification

Course details	Version	Description of change	Authorised by	Date
C749 76	1.1	Minor amendments to the wording of Unit descriptions and Outcomes to align with Unit Specifications.	Qualifications Development Manager	April 2014
	1.2	Scottish Studies Award Unit contributing information added. No other changes made to document content.	Qualifications Manager	September 2014

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Note: You are advised to check SQA's website ([www.sqa.org.uk](http://www.sqa.org.uk)) to ensure you are using the most up-to-date version of the Course Specification.

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