

Higher Modern Studies Course Support Notes



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

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Introduction

These support notes are not mandatory. They provide advice and guidance on approaches to delivering and assessing the Higher Modern Studies Course. They are intended for teachers and lecturers who are delivering the Course and its Units. They should be read in conjunction with the *Course Specification*, the *Course Assessment Specification* and the Unit Specifications for the Units in the Course.

General guidance on the Course

Aims

The purpose of Modern Studies is to develop learners' knowledge and understanding of contemporary political and social issues in local, Scottish, United Kingdom and international contexts. This purpose will be achieved through successful study of the Course Units which focus on the democratic political system in Scotland and the UK, social issues in the UK and international issues.

Through the Modern Studies Course, learners will undertake a coherent study of contemporary society with concepts and themes being revisited and built upon across Units. It 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.

Teachers and lecturers should refer to the *Course Specification and Course Assessment Specification* for mandatory information about the skills, knowledge and understanding to be covered in this Course, as the Course assessment will be based on this.

Progression into this Course

Entry to this Course is at the discretion of the centre. Many learners will benefit from having completed this Course at the level below. Others will draw on comparable learning or experience. Learners will require appropriate literacy and numeracy skills in order to overtake the requirements of this Course.

When considering whether this Course is appropriate for a particular learner, you should refer to the skills, knowledge and understanding described below, and the Outcomes and Assessment Standards. Taken together these provide an overall picture of the level of demand.

Skills, knowledge and understanding covered in this Course

This section provides further advice and guidance about skills, knowledge and understanding that are included in the Course.

Within this mandatory specification, Course planners have considerable flexibility to select coherent contexts which will stimulate and challenge their learners, offering both breadth and depth.

Full skills and knowledge for the Course are provided in the *Course Specification and Course Assessment Specification*. A broad overview of the mandatory

subject skills, knowledge and understanding that will be assessed in the Course includes:

Added value

- ◆ researching, evaluating and synthesising a wide range of sources of information to make and justify decisions

Skills

- ◆ evaluating and synthesising a wide range of sources of information to detect and explain the degree of objectivity, make decisions and draw conclusions

Knowledge and understanding

- ◆ developing and applying factual and theoretical knowledge and understanding and giving detailed explanations and analysis of the main democratic processes, institutions and organisations which make up political life in Scotland and the UK; social issues in Scotland and the UK; and international issues

Progression from this Course

This Course may provide progression to Units or Courses in related social subjects or social science in school, university and further education contexts as well as a range of careers. In particular this Course provides progression to Advanced Higher Modern Studies.

Hierarchies

Hierarchy is the term used to describe Courses and Units which form a structured sequence involving two or more SCQF levels.

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 Units have been written in a hierarchical format, to facilitate multi-level delivery, allow for learners to achieve at their highest level and allow for achievement at a lower level, if necessary. This has been accompanied with considerable flexibility in topics and contexts for learning, to facilitate personalisation and choice for learners and centres. Through all of the Units of the Course there are options and choices of contexts for learning to allow for new and stimulating contexts for learning to be built into Courses.

Learning should be progressive and not repetitive as learners progress through the levels. While Course planning may involve returning to concepts or themes developed at a lower level in order to develop knowledge and understanding and skills in greater depth, it is important that any content in a Course at one particular SCQF level is not repeated excessively as a learner progresses to the next level of the hierarchy. The skills and knowledge should be able to be applied to new content and contexts to enrich the learning experience. This is for centres to manage.

The hierarchical nature of Modern Studies Courses and Units allows the delivery of National 5 and Higher together. The degree of choice within the Course allows for new areas of study for learners who progress from one level to another and ensures that learners are not required to repeat content from one level to the next. Differentiation can be achieved through the use of more complex sources of evidence and greater depth of treatment of common issues or topics.

Different learners develop at different speeds. Hence, it is important that the learner is given the possibility to achieve at the highest level. The hierarchical nature of the Units and Course means that individual learners can be assessed, within the same context, at the appropriate level for them at that time. Learners should be given the opportunity to be assessed at the highest level they are capable of. The profile of an individual learner may consist of Units achieved at more than one level, with some at a level higher than the overall Course.

The Modern Studies assignment provides the opportunity to apply skills and develop knowledge and understanding in a range of activities in preparation for the production of evidence, in a controlled assessment, which will be externally assessed.

Approaches to learning, teaching and assessment

Detailed advice and exemplification of approaches to generating evidence through teaching and learning approaches can be found in the following *Unit Support Notes* for Higher Modern Studies:

- ◆ Modern Studies: Democracy in Scotland and the United Kingdom
- ◆ Modern Studies: Social Issues in the United Kingdom
- ◆ Modern Studies: International Issues

The Modern Studies Course should be seen as a coherent study of aspects of contemporary society. There will be opportunities throughout the Course to reinforce and deepen learning by making links between aspects of knowledge and understanding across Units, depending on the particular topics and issues studied. For example:

- ◆ Understanding the political processes and institutions within Scotland and the United Kingdom will be deepened by comparison with the political system in another society such as the United States of America or with the People's Republic of China.
- ◆ Understanding of social issues may be deepened by studying government responses to inequality in the United Kingdom and comparing this with government responses to this social issue in other countries, for example the approach adopted by the Government in the United Kingdom to tackling racial inequality can be analysed through a comparison with the approach taken in another country studied such as USA or South Africa.

Learning about Scotland and Scottish culture will enrich the learner's learning experience and help them to develop the skills for learning, life and work they need to prepare them for taking their place in a diverse, inclusive and participative Scotland and beyond. Where there are opportunities to contextualise approaches to learning and teaching to Scottish contexts, teachers and lecturers should do this.

Each Unit has a specific skills focus for assessment purposes:

Modern Studies: Democracy in Scotland and the United Kingdom	Using evidence to identify and explain the extent of objectivity.
Modern Studies: Social Issues in the United Kingdom	Using evidence to make and justify a decision.
Modern Studies: International Issues	Using evidence to draw and support conclusions.

It is important to stress that particular skills have been allocated to individual Units for assessment purposes only. This is to avoid over-assessment. The skills, however should be developed and practiced across all the Units and are transferable to all three Units and can be assessed in any section of the question paper component of the Course assessment. The Course overall is intended to develop all the skills outlined in the Course Specification.

There is no recommended teaching order for the Units in this Course. Course planners may wish to consider the how best to introduce the Modern Studies assignment. For example, they may choose to wait until learners have covered a range of topics before making a decision about the topic or issue to be studied. However the development of skills should be a part of teaching and learning from the outset and learners will progressively build up the skills and retain evidence of these skills throughout the Course.

There are likely to be opportunities in the day-to-day delivery of the Units in a Course to generate evidence which satisfies completely or partially a Unit or Units. This is naturally occurring evidence and may be recorded as evidence for the Units or parts of the Units.

While at Higher, teachers and lecturers may wish to design assessments which prepare learners for the Course assessment, considerable flexibility exists in the method and form of Unit assessment. For Unit assessment purposes, a variety of methods of assessment could be used to gather evidence such as extended writing, source evaluation, learner presentations, case studies, role play, research activities and creation of various media.

For further information about Unit assessment, including examples of possible assessment tasks and advice on gathering naturally-occurring evidence, teachers/lecturers should refer to the *Unit assessment support packs* available on SQA's secure site.

Assessment is an integral part of learning and teaching in Curriculum for Excellence. The Higher Modern Studies Course should encourage and support independent learning. Learners should have a clear understanding of the requirements of the Course. Learners should be encouraged to set their own learning objectives, assess the extent of their existing knowledge and be encouraged to review their own progress.

Learners learn best when they: understand clearly what they are trying to learn, and what is expected of them, are given feedback about the quality of their work, and what they can do to make it better, are given advice about how to make improvements and are fully involved in deciding what needs to be done next, and know who can give them help if they need it. To this end:

- ◆ Teachers and lecturers should share learning/assessment criteria.
- ◆ Teachers and lecturers should deliver effective feedback.
- ◆ Teachers and lecturers should encourage peer and self-assessment.
- ◆ Teachers and lecturers should question effectively using higher order questioning when appropriate.

The use of assessment for formative purposes can provide an important role in raising attainment by:

- ◆ giving feedback
- ◆ detailing progress
- ◆ identifying learner strengths and areas for development

Group work approaches can be used within Units and across Courses where it is helpful to simulate real life situations, share tasks and promote team working

skills. However, there must be clear evidence for each learner to show that the learner has met the required assessment standards for the Unit or Course.

Flexibility in the method of assessment within Unit assessments provides opportunities for learners to demonstrate attainment in a variety of ways and reduce barriers to achievement.

Understanding the assessment standards and making assessment judgements

The following guidance aims to support centres when developing activities which may be used to generate evidence that learners have achieved the Outcomes and Assessment Standards for the Units.

Assessment activities are likely to be ones which allow the identification of naturally occurring evidence as part of teaching and learning to determine whether the learner has achieved the Outcome. More formal occasions, when centres use a specific assessment item, may also be used to determine whether the learner has achieved an Outcome or Assessment Standard.

It is expected that candidates will generate evidence for more than one Assessment Standard, or even a whole Outcome as part of one task or response. If this is the case, assessors should note where evidence of each Assessment Standard occurs. Candidates are not required to complete separate tasks for each Assessment Standard within an Outcome, providing they can meet the requirements. In many cases Assessment Standards have been designed to work together.

An example of where Assessment Standards work logically in one task is Outcome 1 in *Democracy in Scotland and the United Kingdom* Unit. Candidates would naturally detect levels of objectivity in a set of sources and then give a detailed explanation of the degree of objectivity within the sources. This could be done, for example, as a report or a presentation.

Outcome 2 in each Unit has been designed to work in one task if desired. A common report or essay style task would expect detailed explanation of an issue before analysis of the issue takes place. Assessors could annotate the report to indicate where each Assessment Standard occurred.

The terminology used in the Outcomes and Assessment Standards are based upon the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF). Centres should note that the Unit Outcomes and Assessment Standards describe a minimum level of competence for the achievement of the Unit and that learners will demonstrate a range of levels of ability within a particular SCQF level.

Centres should also note that flexibility exists in creating assessment items and that a range of factors need to be considered in determining the level of demand. For example, while in general, increasing the number of sources used in a question may increase the level of demand upon the learner; increasing the complexity of a single source will also have the effect of increasing the level of demand.

Greater complexity within a source may be achieved by increasing the amount of information, the level of detail, the method of presentation etc. It should also be noted that a relatively straightforward source may be capable of generating a range of responses.

A learner operating at a lower SCQF level may be able to draw broad, general, relatively simple conclusions from a given source while another learner is capable of a more sophisticated level of analysis and be able to draw more insightful and detailed conclusions from the same source thereby demonstrating achievement of a higher SCQF level.

Examples of appropriate tasks which allow candidates to generate evidence for Assessment Standards are provided in the Unit assessment support packs.

In addition, Unit assessment support packs provide guidance about the qualitative expectations for a candidate response for each Assessment Standard. This can be found in the Judging Evidence Table of these packs.

Unit assessment support packs also provide exemplification of a possible response to a task which overtakes the Assessment Standards. It should be noted that candidate responses will vary with, for example, different evidence, examples and viewpoints being used. However, assessors should follow the qualitative guidance set out in the Judging Evidence Table. Learners should become aware that achieving at least minimum competence in the Assessment Standards will prepare them for Course assessment and also give them a solid grounding in the core elements of Modern Studies as a subject.

Combining assessment across Units

If an integrated or thematic approach to Course delivery is used then there may be opportunities for combining assessment across Units.

This can:

- ◆ enrich the assessment process for the learner by linking assessment more closely to teaching and learning
- ◆ make more sense to the learner and avoid duplication of assessment
- ◆ allow for evidence for particular Units to be drawn from a range of activities
- ◆ allow more time for time for learning

Within this Course, combined assessment could bring together aspects of content from across two or more Units. For example, it may help learner's understanding if a thematic approach is adopted such as an approach which links a study of social inequality drawn from the content of *Social Issues in the United Kingdom* Unit with a study of how another society, studied as part of *International Issues* Unit, tackles this issue.

A case study of how the government takes legislation through the parliamentary process could also enhance knowledge and understanding of a social policy issue if drawn from an area of study within the *Social Issues in the United Kingdom* Unit. Evidence may be generated from a single assessment which meets assessment standards from both Units. Evidence retained from an individual presentation and class discussion of the issue could provide evidence for both Units.

An activity may be created which allows learners to evaluate a wide range of evidence which may include sources of information which represent different viewpoints. Learners may be required to detect and explain lack of objectivity

within these viewpoints and use this judgement to determine how much consideration to give this information when making a decision. A topic which involves possible government responses to a social issue may allow the assessment of both skills within a single activity.

Care should be taken when using combined assessment that those aspects of the Assessment Standard not achieved by the combined assessment are covered by a further assessment. Therefore, when designing an assessment to cover multiple Units, deliverers must ensure that they track and record where evidence of individual Units appears.

It is important that when using this guidance that centres refer to the appropriate Unit Specifications and the Outcomes and Assessment Standards for the Unit.

Added value and gathering evidence

At Higher, the added value will be assessed in the Course assessment.

Information given in the *Course Specification* and the *Course Assessment Specification* about the assessment of added value is mandatory.

- ◆ The learner will draw upon, extend and apply the skills, knowledge and understanding they have learned during the Course. This will be assessed by a question paper and an assignment. Over the Course assessment there will be parity between the assessment of skills and knowledge and understanding.
- ◆ The question paper will require the learner to demonstrate breadth of skills, knowledge and understanding from across the Units of the Course. The question paper will sample knowledge and understanding from across all three Units of the Course and will require application of skills in any context drawn from across all three Units of the Course. Teachers and lecturers should refer to the *Course Assessment Specification* and the specimen question paper for further information.

Level	Possible learner responses	Possible question types
Higher	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Extended response ◆ Evaluation and analysis required ◆ Clear and developed expression of complex ideas ◆ Extensive and relevant use of evidence ◆ Able to consider different perspectives on an issue ◆ Able to make judgements 	20 mark question <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ ... Discuss ◆ To what extent ... 12 mark question <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Evaluate Analyse <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ To what extent is it accurate to state that ... ◆ What conclusions can be drawn...
National 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Detailed response ◆ Description and explanation required with some analysis ◆ Clarity in expression of ideas ◆ Insightful use of evidence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Describe, in detail, ... ◆ Explain, in detail, ... ◆ You must decide which option...What conclusions

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Use of appropriate exemplification 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Explain why the view is selective in the use of facts
National 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Limited response ◆ Brief descriptions and brief explanations ◆ Some clarity and structure in response ◆ Limited use of evidence ◆ Use of obvious exemplification 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Describe ... ◆ Give reasons ...
National 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Short response/outline ◆ Short descriptions ◆ Able to give an obvious reason ◆ Ability to make limited use of simple evidence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Outline ◆ Give two reasons

- ◆ The Modern Studies assignment will require the learner to demonstrate challenge and application related to an appropriate Modern Studies topic or issue. It will be sufficiently open and flexible to allow for personalisation and choice. The learner will research an issue of contemporary relevance about which there is alternative views in order to make a decision. The learner will communicate their findings and decision using the conventions of a report and within broad parameters set by SQA. The learner should use the information collected in order to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the issue. Teachers and lecturers should refer to the *Course Assessment Specification* for further information.
- ◆ The learner will ‘write up’ the results of their research on the topic or issue under controlled assessment conditions. Learners will communicate their findings in a form that shows evidence of the skills they have used and clearly communicates the decision they have reached. The aim of the presentation of findings is to assess the quality of the learner’s research into, analysis of and knowledge and understanding of the issue.
- ◆ Further advice on possible issues drawn from individual Units is given in the *Unit Support Notes*. Learners may wish to choose issues which draw upon knowledge and understanding from across more than one Unit to inform the decision making task. For example, a decision making task on whether or not the UK should adopt proportional representation for elections to the House of Commons could draw upon evidence from another country studied. A decision making task researching a policy initiative to tackle crime in the UK could draw upon knowledge of approaches to crime and the law in the USA.

Preparation for Course assessment

Each Course has an additional time which may be used at the discretion of the teacher or lecturer to enable learners to prepare for Course assessment. This time may be used throughout the Course for consolidation and support. It may also be used for preparation for Unit assessment, and towards the end of the Course, for further integration, revision and preparation and/or gathering evidence for Course assessment.

Activities which it may be appropriate to include within this additional time are described below.

- ◆ Preparation for the assignment. This time could be used by learners for identifying and agreeing a question or scope for the assignment, within the overall guidelines provided by SQA; gathering information and carrying out the research which may include using books, the internet, interviews; analysing and evaluating their findings; preparing their conclusion and revising before the write-up.
- ◆ Revising for the question paper. This may be done individually, in small groups or within the class or group as a whole, at the discretion of the teacher or lecturer.
- ◆ Revising and preparing for Unit assessment. This may be done individually, in small groups or within the class or group as a whole, at the discretion of the teacher or lecturer.

Developing skills for learning, skills for life and skills for work

Through the successful completion of this Course important skills for learning, skills for life and skills for work are developed. A full list of these is contained in the *Course Specification*. Further advice of how these skills may be developed is included in the *Unit Support Notes*.

The skills for learning, skills for life and skills for work will not be formally assessed within the Course assessment. However, Course planners should identify opportunities to enhance these skills throughout the Course. Learners should be aware of the skills they are building and teachers/lecturers can provide advice on opportunities to practice and improve them.

These skills will be developed across all the Units of the Course. The Unit support notes for each Unit will provide further advice on how Units within the Course may provide opportunities to develop particular skills.

There may also be opportunities for other, additional skills for learning, skills for life and skills for work to be developed in the Course. However, this could vary across centres depending on approaches being used to deliver the Course in a centre and this is for centres to manage.

The Modern Studies assignment will also provide opportunities for developing skills for learning, skills for life and skills for work. Learners will have the opportunity to develop reading and writing as they research the assignment topic and write up the outcomes of the activity. They will develop information handling skills as they evaluate and analyse a range of statistical, numerical and graphical information. They will develop citizenship through deepening their understanding of issues facing contemporary society.

They will apply their knowledge to the issue studied, and use analytical and evaluation skills, both in the research process and in preparing their findings for the write up of the decision making task.

Equality and inclusion

The high degree of flexibility within this Course in terms of possible approaches to Unit assessment means that Course and Unit planners can consider and remove potential barriers to learning and assessment. Alternative assessment arrangements and reasonable adjustments can be made to Course assessment requirements in order that this Course is accessible to all learners.

It is recognised that centres have their own duties under equality and other legislation and policy initiatives. The guidance given in these *Course Support Notes* is designed to sit alongside these duties but is specific to the delivery and assessment of the Course.

It is important that centres are aware of and understand SQA's assessment arrangements for disabled learners, and those with additional support needs, when making requests for adjustments to published assessment arrangements. Centres will find more guidance on this in the series of publications on Assessment Arrangements on SQA's website: www.sqa.org.uk/sqa//14977.html.

Appendix 1: Reference documents

The following reference documents will provide useful information and background.

- ◆ [Course Specification](#)
- ◆ [Unit Specifications](#)
- ◆ [Course Assessment Specification](#)
- ◆ [Unit assessment support packs](#)
- ◆ [Specimen Question Paper and Marking Instructions](#)
- ◆ [Specimen Coursework and Marking Instructions](#)
- ◆ Assessment Arrangements (for disabled candidates and/or those with additional support needs) — various publications are available on SQA's website at: www.sqa.org.uk/sqa//14977.html.
- ◆ [Building the Curriculum 3: A framework for learning and teaching](#)
- ◆ [Building the Curriculum 4: Skills for learning, skills for life and skills for work](#)
- ◆ [Building the Curriculum 5: A framework for assessment](#)
- ◆ [Design Principles for National Courses](#)
- ◆ [Guide to Assessment](#)
- ◆ Principles and practice papers for curriculum areas
- ◆ [SCQF Handbook: User Guide](#) and [SCQF level descriptors](#)
- ◆ [SQA Skills Framework: Skills for Learning, Skills for Life and Skills for Work](#)
- ◆ [Skills for Learning, Skills for Life and Skills for Work: Using the Curriculum Tool](#)

Administrative information

Published: May 2015 (version 1.1)

History of changes to Course Support Notes

Course details	Version	Description of change	Authorised by	Date
	1.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ Page 8: Additional information about Unit assessment inserted.◆ Exam paper suggestions removed. More accurate information is now located in the Specimen Question Paper.◆ Table detailing question paper styles updated to clarify the styles which will be used in live papers.◆ Section on combining assessment across Units moved from Course assessment section to Unit assessment section.	Qualifications Manager	May 2015

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Note: You are advised to check SQA's website (www.sqa.org.uk) to ensure you are using the most up-to-date version.

Unit Support Notes — Modern Studies: Democracy in Scotland and the United Kingdom (Higher)



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

Introduction

These support notes are not mandatory. They provide advice and guidance on approaches to delivering and assessing the *Modern Studies: Democracy in Scotland and the United Kingdom* (Higher) Unit. They are intended for teachers and lecturers who are delivering this Unit. They should be read in conjunction with:

- ◆ the *Unit Specification*
- ◆ the *Course Specification*
- ◆ the *Course Assessment Specification*
- ◆ the *Course Support Notes*
- ◆ Unit Assessment Support materials

General guidance on the Unit

Aims

The general aim of this Unit is to develop a range of analytical and evaluating skills; however the specific skills focus for assessment purposes is the development of skills in detecting and explaining the degree of objectivity in political contexts. Learners will develop knowledge and understanding of democracy in Scotland and the United Kingdom.

Progression into this Unit

Entry to this Unit is at the discretion of the centre. Many learners will benefit from having completed this Unit at the level below. Others will draw on comparable learning or experience. Learners will require appropriate literacy and numeracy skills in order to overtake the requirements of this Unit.

When considering whether this Unit is appropriate for a particular learner, you should refer to the skills, knowledge and understanding for the Course, and the Outcomes and Assessment Standards. Taken together these provide an overall picture of the level of demand.

Skills, knowledge and understanding covered in this Unit

Information about skills, knowledge and understanding is given in the Higher Modern Studies *Course Support Notes*.

If this Unit is being delivered on a free-standing basis, teachers and lecturers are free to select the contexts which are most appropriate for delivery in their centres.

Progression from this Unit

This Unit may provide progression to a range of qualifications in related social subjects and social science and in particular to Advanced Higher Modern Studies and Higher Politics.

Approaches to learning, teaching and assessment

The aim of this section is to provide advice and guidance to centres on:

- ◆ opportunities to generate naturally occurring evidence through a range of teaching and learning approaches
- ◆ approaches to added value
- ◆ approaches to developing skills for learning, skills for life and skills for work

Mandatory Course content

The following table shows the mandatory content (left hand column) and illustrative examples of possible ways this content could be covered (right hand column). These illustrative examples are non-mandatory, are for advice only and should not be regarded as exhaustive.

Democracy in Scotland and the United Kingdom (Higher) Unit	
Learners will study aspects of the democratic political system in the United Kingdom (UK) including the place of Scotland within this. Relevant case studies should be used from either Scotland or the UK or both Scotland and the UK.	
Mandatory content for Course assessment	Examples of possible approaches ...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ The UK constitutional arrangement: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — the role and powers of government — changes to the role and powers of the Scottish /UK Parliaments — the ongoing debate over European Union membership 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ The devolved nature of government across the nations of the UK ◆ The role and powers of the Westminster Government and/or the Holyrood Government ◆ Proposed changes/extensions to the powers of devolved bodies. ◆ The impact of EU membership on decision making in the UK. The call for reform of our relationship with the EU. Debate over advantages and disadvantages of EU membership for the UK and/or Scotland
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ The study of representative democracy: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — the role of political representatives — pressures on political representatives — the relationship(s) between the three branches of government (legislature, executive and judiciary) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ The role of MPs, MSPs, MEPs, Local councillors. ◆ Pressures on representatives including from political parties, constituents, local interest groups, personal beliefs. ◆ The passage of a bill through the Westminster and/or the Scottish Parliament. ◆ The role of the second chamber in Westminster and/or the Committees of the Scottish Parliament. ◆ Role of the executive (including Prime Minister/First Minister, Cabinet, Civil Service.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Relationship and balance of power between legislature and executive. ◆ The relationship between the UK and Scottish Parliaments. ◆ The relationship between the UK and Scottish parliaments and local government.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Electoral systems and voting behaviour: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — the impact of electoral systems on election results — strengths and weaknesses of different electoral systems — factors which affect voting behaviour: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • social class • media • age • gender • ethnicity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Description of voting systems in use in the United Kingdom. ◆ Evaluation of voting systems in terms of representation, choice, fairness, complexity. ◆ Impact of voting systems on election results at local, devolved, UK, European levels. ◆ Outcome of elections including majority/minority administration, coalition. ◆ Factors affecting voting behaviour- traditional factors such as social class and their changing importance. Short term factors such as the media profile of party leaders and the growing importance of social media.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ The ways in which citizens are informed about, participate in, and influence the political process: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — the role and influence of pressure groups — the role and influence of the media 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ The role of pressure groups in the political system, their importance in a functioning democracy as a method of participation. ◆ The role of the media in the political system including the differences between the political coverage of different broadcasters and the newspapers. ◆ Evaluation of the influence of pressure groups on the political system. The conditions that allow some groups to be more effective in influencing decision making than others. ◆ Evaluation of the influence of the media on the political system including the influence of the newspapers in recent elections and the ability of parties and their leaders to 'manage' media coverage.

Learning and teaching approaches should be learner focussed. The following examples are illustrative of approaches which may be adopted and which will allow opportunities to gather evidence that learners have achieved one or more of the Unit Outcomes.

Example 1 — The independence debate

Learners may study the issues surrounding the government of Scotland and examine alternative views on constitutional arrangements. They should consider the views of a range of political parties and pressure groups on the options for the government of Scotland. The impact of the 2014 independence referendum and the 2015 General Election on the future shape of Scottish Government should be considered.

Learners could use a range of sources of information at an appropriate level such as: a range of contrasting political party's positions as given in manifestos, public statements media reports; pressure group views; opinion poll evidence; independent/academic research; and electoral and referenda data.

Learners should evaluate a range of sources of information in order to identify and explain the degree of objectivity such as bias, exaggeration and selectivity in the use of evidence.

A range of teaching and learning approaches may be used including:

- ◆ whole class teaching
- ◆ individual research
- ◆ paired or group work
- ◆ class debates
- ◆ role play exercises where groups take on the role of parties/pressure groups representing different viewpoints
- ◆ visiting speakers from a range of political parties
- ◆ media studies contrasting print, visual and digital forms of media
- ◆ visits to UK or Scottish Parliament

Through the study of the issues arising from the debate around the constitutional arrangement, learners will develop a knowledge and understanding of governance, political system and processes and be able to demonstrate analytical skills which will meet the Outcomes and Assessment Standards of the Unit. Activities which could be used to generate evidence include producing a news report, participating in a debate, writing up their findings, undertaking a digital presentation to a group, or creating a blog.

Example 2 — Case study of a pressure group; the Electoral Reform Society

Learners can adopt a case study approach by focusing on a specific pressure group in order to develop their knowledge and understanding of the ways in which the Electoral Reform Society (ERS) attempts to influence the political process.

Learners can study the methods used by the ERS and evaluate the degree of success they have achieved. Since the ERS aims to influence the government and public opinion in the area of electoral reform there will be opportunities to consider the debate over electoral reform and evaluate a range of viewpoints as well as electoral data in order to detect lack of objectivity.

Learners should be able to demonstrate the ability to detect bias, exaggeration and selectivity in the use of facts in regard to the views of a range of participants in the debate including the ERS itself, political parties and the media. Through this case study learners will have opportunities to generate evidence which can be gathered and retained by teachers and lecturers to demonstrate achievement of both Outcomes of this Unit, either wholly or in part.

The overall burden of assessment for the learner may be reduced by using the opportunity to assess holistically within the Unit, allowing achievement of both Outcomes at once. Evidence can be gathered in a range of forms including a written report or a presentation drawing upon supporting materials such as news reports, statistical sources and contrasting viewpoints.

If centres are using a holistic approach to assessment of the Unit it is advisable to track where evidence of the achievement of individual Outcomes and/or assessment standards appears so that learners who do not achieve the complete assessment can still have recognition for what they have achieved and do not have to be reassessed on what they have achieved.

Added value — Modern Studies assignment

The content of this Unit may provide many issues in which learners can demonstrate added value for the Course assessment through the Modern Studies assignment. Learners should choose an issue for study which is both contemporary and relevant; is a Modern Studies topic in that it develops an understanding of the issue through using the approach of one or more of the disciplines of politics, sociology, international relations or economics; and is an issue that creates a range of views and possible policy options thereby allowing a decision to be made.

This Unit will provide rich opportunities for learners to choose a range of possible titles for their Modern Studies assignment, eg:

- ◆ Should Scotland become an independent country?
- ◆ Should the House of Lords be wholly elected?
- ◆ Should Britain leave the European Union?
- ◆ Should the UK Parliament be elected by proportional representation or continue to be elected by the first past the post system?
- ◆ Should the Scottish Parliament continue to have list MSPs?
- ◆ Should voting be compulsory?
- ◆ Should 16-year-olds be able to vote?
- ◆ Should trades unions be allowed to strike?
- ◆ Should the media be allowed to display political bias?

The titles illustrated above are for guidance only and would draw upon knowledge and understanding primarily from the *Democracy in Scotland and the United Kingdom* Unit. Further challenge and application could involve a comparative aspect by drawing upon knowledge and understanding of other political systems developed in the *International Issues* Unit.

Developing skills for learning, skills for life and skills for work

Information about developing skills for learning, skills for life and skills for work across the Course, is given in the relevant *Course Support Notes*.

As the specific skills focus of the Unit is the identification and explanation of the degree of objectivity, learners will develop information handling skills. Learners will be expected to use a range of statistical, numerical and graphical information in order to detect bias, exaggeration and selectivity in the use of facts, this will involve them handling and evaluating data in order to extract significant information and come to judgements on the reliability of the information.

This Unit will provide rich and varied opportunities for learners to consider and develop many aspects of citizenship. Studies of pressure groups, including trades unions and the media will allow learners to develop an understanding of how they as citizens can participate in, and have an influence on, society. Opportunities to visit the Scottish or UK Parliament or local councils may be built into this Unit. Visiting speakers such as the local MP/MSP/MEP or a spokesperson from a pressure group will all develop aspects of citizenship.

Equality and inclusion

The high degree of flexibility within this Unit in terms of possible approaches to assessment means that Course and Unit planners can consider and remove potential barriers to learning and assessment. This Unit should be accessible to all learners.

It is recognised that centres have their own duties under equality and other legislation and policy initiatives. The guidance given in these *Unit Support Notes* is designed to sit alongside these duties but is specific to the delivery and assessment of the Unit.

Alternative approaches to Unit assessment to take account of the specific needs of learners can be used. However, the centre must be satisfied that the integrity of the assessment is maintained and that the alternative approach to assessment will, in fact, generate the necessary evidence of achievement.

Appendix 1: Reference documents

The following reference documents will provide useful information and background.

- ◆ Assessment Arrangements (for disabled candidates and/or those with additional support needs) — various publications are available on SQA's website at: www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/14977.html.
- ◆ [*Building the Curriculum 3: A framework for learning and teaching*](#)
- ◆ [*Building the Curriculum 4: Skills for learning, skills for life and skills for work*](#)
- ◆ [*Building the Curriculum 5: A framework for assessment*](#)
- ◆ [*Course Specification*](#)
- ◆ [*Design Principles for National Courses*](#)
- ◆ [*Guide to Assessment*](#)
- ◆ Principles and practice papers for curriculum areas
- ◆ [*SCQF Handbook: User Guide*](#) and [*SCQF level descriptors*](#)
- ◆ [*SQA Skills Framework: Skills for Learning, Skills for Life and Skills for Work*](#)
- ◆ [*Skills for Learning, Skills for Life and Skills for Work: Using the Curriculum Tool*](#)
- ◆ [*Coursework Authenticity: A Guide for Teachers and Lecturers*](#)
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- ◆ [*SQA Guidelines on e-assessment for Schools*](#)
- ◆ [*SQA Guidelines on Online Assessment for Further Education*](#)
- ◆ [*SQA e-assessment web page*](#)

Administrative information

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History of changes to Unit Support Notes

Unit details	Version	Description of change	Authorised by	Date
	1.1	Approaches to learning, teaching and assessment section updated.	Qualifications Manager	May 2015

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Unit Support Notes — Modern Studies: Social Issues in the United Kingdom (Higher)



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

Introduction

These support notes are not mandatory. They provide advice and guidance on approaches to delivering and assessing the *Modern Studies: Social Issues in the United Kingdom* (Higher) Unit. They are intended for teachers and lecturers who are delivering this Unit. They should be read in conjunction with:

- ◆ the *Unit Specification*
- ◆ the *Course Specification*
- ◆ the *Course Assessment Specification*
- ◆ the *Course Support Notes*
- ◆ Unit Assessment Support Packs

General guidance on the Unit

Aims

The general aim of this Unit is to develop learners' skills of researching and evaluating a range of written, numerical and graphical sources of information in order to make and justify decisions in the context of social issues. Learners will draw on their knowledge and understanding of social issues within the United Kingdom and Scotland.

Progression into this Unit

Entry to this Unit is at the discretion of the centre. Many learners will benefit from having completed this Unit at the level below. Others will draw on comparable learning or experience. Learners will require appropriate literacy and numeracy skills in order to overtake the requirements of this Unit.

When considering whether this Unit is appropriate for a particular learner, you should refer to the skills, knowledge and understanding for the Course, and the Outcomes and Assessment Standards. Taken together these provide an overall picture of the level of demand.

Skills, knowledge and understanding covered in this Unit

Information about skills, knowledge and understanding is given in the Higher Modern Studies *Course Specification* and *Course Assessment Specification*.

If this Unit is being delivered on a free-standing basis, teachers and lecturers are free to select the contexts which are most appropriate for delivery in their centres.

Progression from this Unit

This Unit may provide progression to a range of qualifications in related social subjects and social science and in particular to Advanced Higher Modern Studies

Approaches to learning, teaching and assessment

The aim of this section is to provide advice and guidance to centres on:

- ◆ opportunities to generate naturally occurring evidence through a range of teaching and learning approaches
- ◆ approaches to added value
- ◆ approaches to developing skills for learning, skills for life and skills for work

The following table shows the mandatory content (left hand column) and illustrative examples of possible ways this content could be covered (right hand column). These illustrative examples are non-mandatory, are for advice only and should not be regarded as exhaustive.

Social Issues in the United Kingdom (Higher) Unit	
<p>Learners have a choice of social issue: contexts for study will focus on either <i>Social Inequality</i> or <i>Crime and the Law</i>. In the social inequality context, learners will focus on the impact of social inequality in the UK on any relevant group. In the crime and the law context, learners will focus on relevant and contemporary aspects of crime, criminology and the law. In both Social Issues contexts appropriate references should be made to Scotland, the UK or both Scotland and the UK.</p>	
Social inequality in the United Kingdom:	
Mandatory content for Course assessment	Examples of possible approaches...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ The nature of social inequality in the United Kingdom in relation to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — income/wealth — health — education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ The nature of social inequality in the UK: income inequality affecting health, housing, family structure, educational attainment etc. ◆ Evidence of inequality as shown in official government publications; pressure groups; policy groups; voluntary organisations etc. ◆ Case studies of geographical areas where the population shares similar socio-economic characteristics.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Explanations/Theories of inequality: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — sociological explanations/theories — individualist explanations/theories 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ The debate between individualist sociological theories and collectivist sociological theories. ◆ The ways in which these theories are reflected in modern society through the policies of competing political parties, the welfare state, the NHS and other institutions.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ The impact of these aspects of social inequality on any relevant group or groups in society. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ The impact of social inequality on specific groups; women, ethnic minorities, the elderly, the disabled, lone parents, with regard to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — income — employment

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — education — housing — health <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Opportunities for, and barriers to, social mobility; prejudice, welfare reform etc.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Attempts to tackle inequalities and their effectiveness; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — public provision of services: benefits, housing, health, education, — Third sector — individualistic approaches 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Legislation; the National Minimum Wage Act or the Equality Act. ◆ The benefits system including different categories of benefits; universal or means tested. And those aimed at specific groups. ◆ Case study of the NHS in the UK; origins, current issues, political opinion, future development. ◆ Community programmes; operated by charities, religious groups or private business. ◆ Individualistic approaches .such as those proposed by some political parties. ◆ Evaluation of the success of different responses in tackling inequalities.
Crime and the law in the United Kingdom:	
Mandatory content for Course assessment	Examples of possible approaches
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ The role of law in society <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — legal rights and responsibilities — civil and criminal aspects of the legal system 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ legal rights and responsibilities; innocent until proven guilty, fair trial, legal representation, respect for property, equal rights. ◆ scope of law in society: civil, criminal; categories of crime. ◆ aspects of the legal system, eg courts, police, penal system
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Theories and causes of crime: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — social explanations/theories — individualistic explanations/theories 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ biological theories ◆ psychological theories ◆ sociological theories ◆ individualist free choice theories/ collectivist socialisation theories
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ The impact of crime on society: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — the impact on victims, and offenders and the families of victims and offenders — the social, economic and political impact on the wider community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ personal impact on the victim: financial loss, loss of confidence, loss of income, physical suffering ◆ personal impact on the offender, financial penalty, incarceration, unemployment, loss of status/respect ◆ impact on families of victims/offenders; loss of loved one, financial hardship, loss of status/respect ◆ community impact; economic consequences due to loss of investment leading to higher unemployment, poverty ◆ political impact; issue for governments and local councils if there is a perceived failure to tackle crime; political costs as well as economic costs in high crime areas.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Methods of tackling crime and their effectiveness: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — punitive solutions — rehabilitative — socio/economic solutions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ punitive solutions; fines, prison sentences (short/long term) ◆ community based sentences such as CSOs, tagging orders ◆ socio/economic solutions such as encouragement of economic growth in order to increase employment, improve housing and other social conditions, educational initiatives ◆ evaluation of the success of different methods in tackling crime
<p>Throughout this Unit relevant case studies of groups such as those on a low income (individuals and families), women and ethnic minorities should be used.</p>	

Learning and teaching approaches should be learner focussed. The following examples are illustrative of approaches which may be adopted and which will allow opportunities to gather evidence that learners have achieved one or more of the Unit Outcomes.

Example 1 — Welfare to work debate

This activity could be introduced by a class discussion of the two broad approaches to tackling social inequality:

- ◆ Individualistic approaches/theories which emphasise individual responsibility and focus on reducing disincentives to work through changes to the benefits system etc.
- ◆ Collectivist approaches/theories which emphasise the responsibility of government and wider society to create opportunities for employment and a greater role for government.

In order to develop decision making skills and demonstrate a wide range of possible policy measures, the class could be divided into two groups with one group researching possible individualistic approaches while the other researches collectivist approaches to this policy issue; alternatively, the class could be paired with one member of each pair focusing on each of the two approaches.

It may be that learners are encouraged to focus on a policy approach which is closer to their own view however the ability to present a case, irrespective of whether it agrees with their own view is a useful skill to develop and teachers/lecturers may wish to encourage learners to consider approaches/theories/views different from their own.

Learners should begin to research and identify policy options within the broad approach, eg reduction in the real value of benefits/state support, training schemes, job creation programmes, time limited benefits, legislative approaches, increase/decrease the National Minimum Wage.

Learners should research, in depth, one policy initiative. They should research a range of views of different political parties, social policy think tanks, media sources etc. They could present the case for their chosen initiative,

demonstrating a knowledge and understanding of the policy and the arguments in support of this policy.

If working in a pair they could present their policy to their partner for discussion and constructive criticism and vice versa. This would deepen their understanding of their chosen policy and increase their awareness of counter arguments to their policy. Alternatively, the research phase could be followed by a wider class discussion or debate.

The teacher/lecturer could determine a way of deciding the most favoured option, following the paired discussion or debate, eg a class vote, elimination, 'X-factor' or 'Apprentice' style scenario.

A number of opportunities would arise within this activity to gather evidence for assessment purposes, such as:

- ◆ a class debate could be videoed with individual learners demonstrating knowledge and understanding of their chosen policy initiatives and decision making skills where they demonstrate the reasons for choosing the particular policy and why they rejected other options
- ◆ learners may write up a formal proposal for their chosen policy initiative using a report style in order to develop skills which would be used in the Modern Studies assignment
- ◆ learners should retain a folio (paper or electronic) of selected evidence gathered during their research, this should be annotated and the source identified

Example 2 — Visits

The crime and the law topic provides rich and varied opportunities to take learning outside of the classroom and enable learners to take part in visits. In general, these visits are best conducted as a group. Visits to a local police station, Sheriff and/or District Courts or prisons may be possible. As a preparation for, follow up to or as an alternative if no visit can be arranged, police officers, court officials and prison officers may be able to visit centres and answer questions or brief learners.

While the points below relate to a prison visit the advice below would be appropriate for visits to a local police station, courts or other institutions. Good preparation for learners before the visit, detailed planning of the visit itself and follow up activities will ensure the maximum benefit from the activity.

A number of centres have been able to arrange visits to a prison for learners. This is dependent upon the ability of the prison to receive visitors, distance and cost factors. Where they can be arranged, they can be very productive and provide rich teaching and learning opportunities beyond the classroom. Prisons with experience of such visits are usually able to assist with risk assessment procedures.

This activity should be preceded by a background discussion identifying the aims of prison and considering the issues/debates around the prison system and the use of prison.

Learners could prepare for the visit by collating their own perceptions of prison or researching perceptions of prison held by the public through a questionnaire and/or media reports.

Prior to the visit, learner preparation would involve preparing:

- ◆ questions for prisoners
- ◆ questions for prison officers
- ◆ sheet to record observations

It is likely to be the case that there will be strict guidelines issued prior to the visit by the prison authorities and clear advice on how the visit is to be conducted, learners should reflect upon the reasons for these guidelines and restrictions.

Learners should make notes, either individually or collectively, during their visit and write these up or collate them after the visit is over.

A number of opportunities would arise within this activity to gather evidence for assessment purposes, eg:

- ◆ a written report of the visit with a conclusion as to how well prison achieves its aims
- ◆ an evaluative report — based on evidence from prior research and the visit
- ◆ a report may be presented in a range of ways including a video diary/news report/podcast

The overall burden of assessment for the learner may be reduced by using the opportunity to assess holistically within the Unit, allowing achievement of both Outcomes at once. Evidence can be gathered in a range of forms including a written report or a presentation drawing upon supporting materials such as news reports, statistical sources and contrasting viewpoints.

If centres are using a holistic approach to assessment of the Unit it is advisable to track where evidence of the achievement of individual Outcomes and/or assessment standards appears so that learners who do not achieve the complete assessment can still have recognition for what they have achieved and do not have to be reassessed on what they have achieved.

Added Value — Modern Studies Assignment

The content of this Unit may provide many issues in which learners can demonstrate added value for the Course assessment in the Modern Studies assignment. Learners should choose an issue for study which is both contemporary and relevant; is a Modern Studies topic in that it develops an understanding of the issue through using the approach of one or more of the disciplines of politics, sociology, international relations or economics; and is an issue that creates a range of views and possible policy options thereby allowing a decision to be made.

This Unit will provide rich opportunities for learners to choose a range of possible titles for their Modern Studies assignment, eg:

- ◆ Should prisoners be eligible for early release?
- ◆ Should child benefit be means tested?
- ◆ Should everyone have to work for their benefit?
- ◆ Should mandatory prison sentences be introduced for carrying a knife?

- ◆ Should the minimum wage be a living wage?
- ◆ Is positive discrimination a way to reduce inequality in the UK?
- ◆ Prison or Community Service Orders?

The titles illustrated above are for guidance only and would draw upon knowledge and understanding primarily from the *Modern Studies: Social Issues in the United Kingdom* Unit. Further challenge and application could involve a comparative aspect by drawing on knowledge and understanding of other societies developed in the *Modern Studies: International Issues* Unit or applying knowledge of the UK political system developed in the *Modern Studies: Democracy in Scotland and the United Kingdom* Unit.

Developing skills for learning, skills for life and skills for work

Information about developing skills for learning, skills for life and skills for work across the Course, is given in the relevant *Course Support Notes*.

As the specific skills focus of the Unit is decision making, this will help learners develop information handling skills. They will be expected to use a range of statistical, numerical and graphical information in order to make and justify a decision on a social policy issue, this will involve learners handling and evaluating data in order to extract significant information and to synthesise this information in order to make the case for the decision and explain the reasons for rejecting another option.

This Unit will provide rich and varied opportunities for learners to consider and develop many aspects of citizenship, including the ways in which government social policies impact on individuals and society as a whole; how public opinion on social policies has an effect on government policies and the role of a range of public bodies. Issues of fairness will permeate the social inequalities context and rights and responsibilities will be a major feature of the crime and the law context.

Equality and inclusion

The high degree of flexibility within this Unit in terms of possible approaches to assessment means that Course and Unit planners can consider and remove potential barriers to learning and assessment. This Unit should be accessible to all learners.

It is recognised that centres have their own duties under equality and other legislation and policy initiatives. The guidance given in these *Unit Support Notes* is designed to sit alongside these duties but is specific to the delivery and assessment of the Unit.

Alternative approaches to Unit assessment to take account of the specific needs of learners can be used. However, the centre must be satisfied that the integrity of the assessment is maintained and where the alternative approach to assessment will, in fact, generate the necessary evidence of achievement.

Appendix 1: Reference documents

The following reference documents will provide useful information and background.

- ◆ Assessment Arrangements (for disabled candidates and/or those with additional support needs) — various publications are available on SQA’s website at: www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/14977.html.
- ◆ [*Building the Curriculum 4: Skills for learning, skills for life and skills for work*](#)
- ◆ [*Building the Curriculum 5: A framework for assessment*](#)
- ◆ [*Course Specification*](#)
- ◆ [*Design Principles for National Courses*](#)
- ◆ [*Guide to Assessment*](#)
- ◆ Principles and practice papers for curriculum areas
- ◆ [*SCQF Handbook: User Guide*](#) and [*SCQF level descriptors*](#)
- ◆ [*SQA Skills Framework: Skills for Learning, Skills for Life and Skills for Work*](#)
- ◆ [*Skills for Learning, Skills for Life and Skills for Work: Using the Curriculum Tool*](#)
- ◆ [*Coursework Authenticity: A Guide for Teachers and Lecturers*](#)
- ◆ [*Research Report 4 — Less is More: Good Practice in Reducing Assessment Time*](#)
- ◆ [*SQA Guidelines on e-assessment for Schools*](#)
- ◆ [*SQA Guidelines on Online Assessment for Further Education*](#)
- ◆ [*SQA e-assessment web page*](#)

Administrative information

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History of changes to Unit Support Notes

Unit details	Version	Description of change	Authorised by	Date
	1.1	Approaches to learning, teaching and assessment section updated.	Qualifications Manager	May 2015

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Unit Support Notes — Modern Studies: International Issues (Higher)



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

Introduction

These support notes are not mandatory. They provide advice and guidance on approaches to delivering and assessing the *Modern Studies: International Issues* (Higher) Unit. They are intended for teachers and lecturers who are delivering this Unit. They should be read in conjunction with:

- ◆ the *Unit Specification*
- ◆ the *Course Specification*
- ◆ the *Course Assessment Specification*
- ◆ the *Course Support Notes*
- ◆ Unit Assessment Support Packs

General guidance on the Unit

Aims

The general aim of this Unit is to a range of analytical and evaluating skills; however the specific skills focus for assessment purposes is the development of skills of evaluating a range of written, numerical and graphical sources of information in order to draw and support conclusions in international contexts. Learners will draw on their knowledge and understanding of international issues.

Progression into this Unit

Entry to this Unit is at the discretion of the centre. Many learners will benefit from having completed this Unit at the level below. Others will draw on comparable learning or experience. Learners will require appropriate literacy and numeracy skills in order to overtake the requirements of this Unit.

When considering whether this Unit is appropriate for a particular learner, you should refer to the skills, knowledge and understanding for the Course, and the Outcomes and Assessment Standards. Taken together these provide an overall picture of the level of demand.

Skills, knowledge and understanding covered in this Unit

Information about skills, knowledge and understanding is given in the Higher Modern Studies *Course Specification and Course Assessment Specification*.

If this Unit is being delivered on a free-standing basis, teachers and lecturers are free to select the contexts which are most appropriate for delivery in their centres.

Progression from this Unit

This Unit may provide progression to a range of qualifications in related social subjects and social science and in particular to Advanced Higher Modern Studies and Higher Politics.

Approaches to learning, teaching and assessment

The aim of this section is to provide advice and guidance to centres on:

- ◆ opportunities to generate naturally occurring evidence through a range of teaching and learning approaches
- ◆ approaches to added value
- ◆ approaches to developing skills for learning, skills for life and skills for work

The following table shows the mandatory content (left hand column) and illustrative examples of possible ways this content could be covered (right hand column). These illustrative examples are non-mandatory, are for advice only and should not be regarded as exhaustive.

Modern Studies: International Issues (Higher) Unit	
Learners have a choice of international issue: contexts for study will focus on either a political and social/economic study of a major world power or the study of a significant contemporary world issue. World powers may be chosen from members of the G20 group of countries, including the European Union but excluding the United Kingdom. The study of a world issue will focus on a significant recent issue or conflict which has a global impact.	
A political and socio-economic study of a major world power	
Mandatory content for Course assessment	Examples of possible approaches...
The major world power studied must be drawn from the membership of the G20 Group (which includes the European Union) but excluding the UK. Centres have considerable flexibility about which power they will study but will wish to consider the access to resources and on-going issues within the world power chosen.	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Political system and processes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — constitutional arrangements and institutions — opportunities for participation — the extent of democratic influence and control 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ the political system: constitutional arrangements; relationship between the executive, legislature and judiciary. ◆ institutions; nature and effectiveness of the main legislative bodies, head of state, political parties ◆ political processes; elections and the electoral systems used and the appointment of governments. ◆ political rights and responsibilities of citizens; the ability of the population to influence government directly ◆ influencing the political process and opportunities for participation in political parties and pressure groups ◆ evaluation of the political system and the extent to which the government is accountable to the will of the people
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Recent socio-economic issues <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — nature and extent 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ social inequality between significant groups in society; cause of the issue and recent developments

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> of a significant socio-economic issue — impact of the socio-economic issue on a specific group in society — effectiveness of government responses to a socio- economic issue 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ impact of inequality on a group in society; ethnic groupings, gender groupings, age groupings ◆ the responses of government to inequality and their attempts to tackle the issue; benefits, services, economic investment, educational initiatives, housing initiatives ◆ evaluation of the effectiveness of government responses in tackling social inequality
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ The role of the world power in international relations — involvement in international organisations — relationship with other countries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ involvement in international organisations; UN, EU, NATO, African Union ◆ relationship with other countries; relationship with immediate neighbours including political, economic, humanitarian or military support ◆ evaluation of international influence and power through impact on immediate neighbours, region and whole world
A study of a significant world issue:	
Mandatory content for Course assessment	Examples of possible approaches...
<p>The major world issue chosen for study should be one which has contemporary relevance, has implications beyond a single country or region and affects other countries either as direct participants or as parties to an attempted resolution.</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Causes of the issue: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — nature and extent of the world issue — political, social and economic factors that give rise to the international issue 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ overview of world issue and appreciation of the scale of its impact ◆ political/ religious reasons for conflict ◆ social, economic factors that give rise to an international issue such as poverty, unemployment, disputes over territory
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Effects of the issue on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — individuals — countries and their governments — the international community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ effects of the issue on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — individuals; poverty, homelessness, disease, isolation, violence, death — countries and their governments ;lack of investment, break down of civil society, break down of law and order, bullied by neighbouring states — regions; instability in the region leading to similar problems in neighbouring countries or conflict with powerful neighbours — the international community; division within the international community; within the UN security council, disputes over resources, deployment of armed forces and other

	specialists
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Attempts to resolve the issue: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — role and effectiveness of individual countries — role and effectiveness of international organisations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ national attempts to resolve the issue; military, humanitarian, financial ◆ regional and international attempts to resolve international issues; the UN, EU, NATO, African Union (peacekeeping, financial or other aid, peace talks, embargos) ◆ evaluation of national, regional and international attempts to resolve international issues

Learning and teaching approaches should be learner focussed. The following examples are illustrative of approaches which may be adopted and which will allow opportunities to gather evidence that learners have achieved one or more of the Unit Outcomes.

Example 1 — International links

A number of schools/local authorities already have established links with a school/local authority in another G20 country. A video conference meet can be arranged so that learners may ask direct questions of a number of people, eg other learners, teachers, local officials.

Preparation: At start of session, school/department has planned for video conferencing. Necessary pre-conference organisation (foreign contact, date, time, location, technical equipment/support, etc.) is arranged in advance.

Learners have been studying the political system, the main socio-economic issues and the influence of a G20 country in international organisations. The conference therefore comes near the end of their studies in this Unit.

Learners have prepared a range of questions in advance. These are linked clearly to the aims of the Unit. Learners and their questions are arranged into groups to avoid duplication. Questions are e-mailed to the linked school/local authority beforehand to allow time for full responses.

On the day, the video conference is recorded although learners have a written copy of their questions. They can also take notes. The conference is structured to allow for discussion.

Follow up: Learners would prepare to report their findings to the whole school at year/house assemblies. The report could be in the form of a short oral presentation with short sections of the event available for reference.

An opportunity would arise within this activity to gather evidence for assessment purposes:

- ◆ Learners would retain their individual questions and responses in either paper (note) or electronic format.
- ◆ The responses received would be used to write up short conclusions on political (national and international) and socio-economic issues affecting their chosen G20 country which could contribute to their Modern Studies assignment

Optional: Learners/teachers would visit the country as part of on-going links between the school/local authority and linked country. School/local authority has made use of various educational budgets to enable learners to participate.

Example 2 — Internet research and presentation

Within a study of a major world issue, learners have been studying the extent of development across Africa. They have been asked to choose two African countries for a comparative study. Using a range of established websites (UN, DfID, World Bank, CIA etc.) they would gather statistical information on a range of development indicators; eg life expectancy, child mortality, education, GNP to build up a profile of development within each country.

Learners have also been asked to examine the developmental impact of one international organisation/agency (eg UN specialised agency or an NGO) on their two chosen African countries.

After researching and collecting a range of information, learners would produce a digital presentation/news report/mini report (or similar) that covers the extent of development within each country and provides evidence of the impact of an international organisation/agency within each country. The presentation would be retained for assessment purposes. The use of a range of numerical, graphical and statistical information could be used to reach conclusions about the effectiveness of the intervention of the international organisation/agency on each of the countries studied.

The overall burden of assessment for the learner may be reduced by using the opportunity to assess holistically within the Unit, allowing achievement of both Outcomes at once. Evidence can be gathered in a range of forms including a written report or a presentation drawing upon supporting materials such as news reports, statistical sources and contrasting viewpoints.

If centres are using a holistic approach to assessment of the Unit it is advisable to track where evidence of the achievement of individual Outcomes and/or assessment standards appears so that learners who do not achieve the complete assessment can still have recognition for what they have achieved and do not have to be reassessed on what they have achieved.

Added Value — Modern Studies assignment

The content of this Unit may provide many issues in which learners can demonstrate added value for the Course assessment through the Modern Studies assignment. Learners should choose an issue for study which is both contemporary and relevant; is a Modern Studies topic in that it develops an understanding of the issue through using the approach of one or more of the disciplines of politics, sociology, international relations or economics; and is an issue that creates a range of views and possible policy options thereby allowing a decision to be made. This Unit will provide rich opportunities for learners to choose a range of possible titles for their Modern Studies assignment, eg:

- ◆ Should the USA further restrict immigration?
- ◆ Should China aim to become more democratic?
- ◆ Are inequalities as great within ethnic groups as between ethnic groups in South Africa?
- ◆ Are the people of Brazil benefiting equally from economic development?
- ◆ Will India become as an 'economic superpower'?
- ◆ Is Japan a country in economic decline?

- ◆ Aid or trade — which provides for better long-term development?
- ◆ Is democracy developing in the Middle East?
- ◆ To what extent is international terrorism a threat to the UK?
- ◆ Should the Security Council of the United Nations be reformed?
- ◆ Should European countries take more responsibility for their own defence?
- ◆ Should the European Union continue to enlarge?

The titles illustrated above are for guidance only and would draw upon knowledge and understanding primarily from the *Modern Studies: International Issues* Unit. Further challenge and application could involve a comparative aspect by drawing on knowledge and understanding of social issues in the United Kingdom developed in the *Modern Studies: Social Issues in the United Kingdom* Unit or the UK political system developed in the *Modern Studies: Democracy in Scotland and the United Kingdom* Unit.

Developing skills for learning, skills for life and skills for work

Information about developing skills for learning, skills for life and skills for work across the Course, is given in the relevant *Course Support Notes*.

As the specific skills focus of the Unit is drawing and supporting conclusions, learners will develop information handling skills in the process. They will be expected to use a range of statistical, numerical and graphical information in order to draw and support a conclusion on an international issue, this will involve learners handling and evaluating data in order to identify and evaluate significant information and to synthesise this information in order to support any conclusions reached.

This Unit will provide rich and varied opportunities for learners to consider and develop many aspects of citizenship. The study of a political system in another society will complement the study of the political system and political issues in Scotland and the UK. A country with a similar political system will allow a direct comparison with the Scottish/UK system while a study of a political system with a very different approach to politics and rights and responsibilities will allow learners to reflect upon varied approaches to politics and consider their strengths and weaknesses thereby developing a deeper understanding of the political system in their own society.

The study of a major world issue may allow learners to consider how the international community, including voluntary organisations are able to become involved in attempting to find a resolution to international problems.

Equality and inclusion

The high degree of flexibility within this Unit in terms of possible approaches to assessment means that Course and Unit planners can consider and remove potential barriers to learning and assessment. This Unit should be accessible to all learners.

It is recognised that centres have their own duties under equality and other legislation and policy initiatives. The guidance given in these *Unit Support Notes* is designed to sit alongside these duties but is specific to the delivery and assessment of the Unit.

Alternative approaches to Unit assessment to take account of the specific needs of learners can be used. However, the centre must be satisfied that the integrity of the assessment is maintained and that the alternative approach to assessment will, in fact, generate the necessary evidence of achievement.

Appendix 1: Reference documents

The following reference documents will provide useful information and background.

- ◆ Assessment Arrangements (for disabled candidates and/or those with additional support needs) — various publications are available on SQA's website at: www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/14977.html.
- ◆ [Building the Curriculum 4: Skills for learning, skills for life and skills for work](#)
- ◆ [Building the Curriculum 5: A framework for assessment](#)
- ◆ [Course Specification](#)
- ◆ [Design Principles for National Courses](#)
- ◆ [Guide to Assessment](#)
- ◆ Principles and practice papers for curriculum areas
- ◆ [SCQF Handbook: User Guide](#) and [SCQF level descriptors](#)
- ◆ [SQA Skills Framework: Skills for Learning, Skills for Life and Skills for Work](#)
- ◆ [Skills for Learning, Skills for Life and Skills for Work: Using the Curriculum Tool](#)
- ◆ [Coursework Authenticity: A Guide for Teachers and Lecturers](#)
- ◆ [Research Report 4 — Less is More: Good Practice in Reducing Assessment Time](#)
- ◆ [SQA Guidelines on e-assessment for Schools](#)
- ◆ [SQA Guidelines on Online Assessment for Further Education](#)
- ◆ [SQA e-assessment web page](#)

Administrative information

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History of changes to Unit Support Notes

Unit details	Version	Description of change	Authorised by	Date
	1.1	Approaches to learning, teaching and assessment section updated.	Qualifications Manager	May 2015

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