

# X236/12/02

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NATIONAL  
QUALIFICATIONS  
2012

FRIDAY, 11 MAY  
10.50 AM – 12.05 PM

MODERN STUDIES  
HIGHER  
Paper 2

### Summary of Decision Making Exercise

You are an education policy adviser. You have been asked to prepare a report for the Scottish Government Cabinet Secretary for Education and Life Long Learning in which you recommend or reject *Breakthrough*, a proposal to set aside at least 33% of places at Scottish universities for young people from a working-class background.

Before beginning the DME (Q5), you must answer a number of evaluating questions (Q1–4) based on the source material provided. The source material is:

**SOURCE A:** Genuine Educational Equality

**SOURCE B:** One Inequality Replaces Another

**SOURCE C:** Statistical Information



## SOURCE A: GENUINE EDUCATIONAL EQUALITY

In order to achieve the highest paid employment, a degree from university is normally required. Equality of access to university is an important part of a progressive society. However, in Scotland there is little equality of educational opportunity. Statistics show Scottish universities have, on average, a minority of students with parents from a  
5 working-class background, with Edinburgh and Glasgow universities having the lowest figures. In other European countries, legislation has increased the number of students from working-class backgrounds going to university. In the interests of fairness and to improve social mobility, Scotland needs to follow Europe's lead. Positive discrimination has worked well in other countries and would work well here.

10 *Breakthrough* is a proposal to tackle higher education inequality. It requires Scottish universities to set aside at least 33% of undergraduate places for young people from a working-class background. To maintain standards, only those who achieve the entry requirements for the course for which they apply will gain entry to university. Many  
15 young people whose parents may not have had the opportunity to benefit from a university education, can now focus on their studies with an expectation that a university place is theirs, if they attain the relevant qualifications.

There will be many educational advantages if the *Breakthrough* proposal is adopted. Higher education exam results would improve as evidence suggests that students from working-class backgrounds often attain better university qualifications in the  
20 long-term than their middle-class peers. University life would be enriched by having a student intake that is socially more diverse. Secondary schools already provide many programmes that encourage young people to pursue a university education but more needs to be done. *Breakthrough* is that next step.

*Breakthrough* is also important to the future of the Scottish economy. It will help to  
25 ensure that more of our talented young people achieve their educational potential. Employers will gain as the quality of graduate improves. The public services will benefit from the next generation of senior judges, lawyers and health professionals having wider life experience. Currently, the professions are completely dominated by those who have been privately educated at fee-paying schools. How can this be fair in  
30 the 21st Century? Given time, *Breakthrough* will sit alongside other government policies that have been successful in improving educational opportunity.

Finally, government, not individuals, is best placed to reduce inequality in society. There is a great deal of evidence to prove that legislation to reduce different types of social inequalities works. The law has helped improve the position of women. Many  
35 other disadvantaged groups have also benefited from forward-looking government action. *Breakthrough* will give hope to those less affluent groups who have been subject to a wide range of inequalities for far too long.

Stephen Morris, Scottish Education Policy Adviser

## SOURCE B: ONE INEQUALITY REPLACES ANOTHER

Most initiatives that encourage young people from working-class backgrounds into higher education are to be commended. However, the *Breakthrough* proposal is a step in the wrong direction. Although *Breakthrough* retains minimum qualifications for university entrance, the reality is that many university courses are oversubscribed. If  
5 33% of university places are reserved for those from working-class backgrounds, that means fewer places for other students, many of whom will be high achievers. It cannot be fair that better off university candidates are discriminated against because of their social class. The Government should not introduce a “quick fix” solution that simply replaces one inequality with another.

10 There is already a wide range of support at school and in the community to help those from disadvantaged backgrounds. Research shows that a majority of young people believe better advice and information would be most likely to help them enter a professional career. Recent Government legislation places a very high importance on equality of opportunity. In other countries, attempts to influence university intake  
15 by government have been dropped and for good reason: policies such as *Breakthrough* are patronising to young people from working-class backgrounds. It effectively tells them, and future employers, that they only gained entry to university because of their background.

*Breakthrough* must also be rejected on economic grounds. Successful companies depend  
20 on the best person for the job and not well-intentioned, but ultimately ineffective, policies such as *Breakthrough*. At the moment, businesses are going through a tough time. To compete in the global market they need the most able people emerging from university. Currently, the UK leads the world in areas such as medical science but this will end if universities cannot freely choose who they want to admit. Scotland’s future  
25 prosperity depends on the reputation of our great universities. We cannot dilute the quality of our graduates.

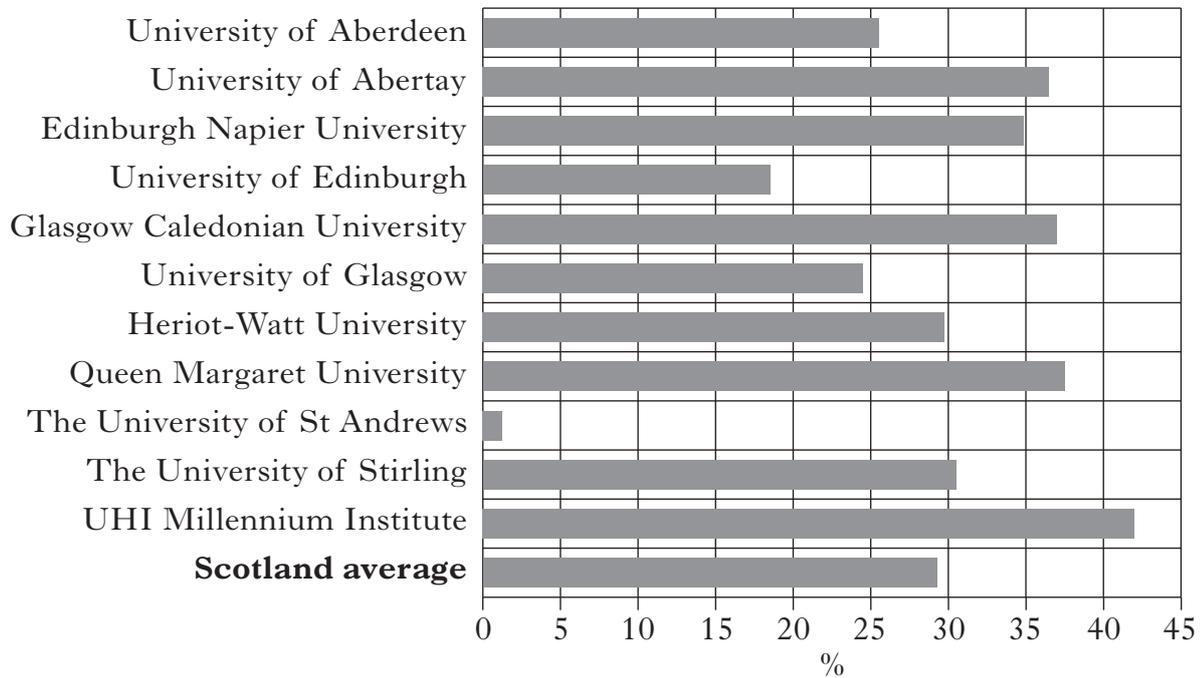
If government is serious about improving social mobility, it needs to invest more in vocational education and skills training. Today’s economy requires workers who are knowledgeable, confident, responsible and able to contribute effectively. Society  
30 needs to better value and reward people with these skills instead of encouraging more and more people to go to university. Many of the jobs in the future will be in the tertiary or service sector such as information technology, finance and care. Although around a third of students from working-class backgrounds study subjects such as law or biological science, it would be better to encourage young people into skilled trades  
35 where wages are higher than professional salaries. Good, vocationally trained staff are in short supply. At the end of the day, it is not the Government’s responsibility to engineer university intake but for individuals to work hard in order that they meet the requirements for university entrance.

Gillian Gilbert, Scottish Newspaper Columnist

**[Turn over for Source C on Pages four, five and six**

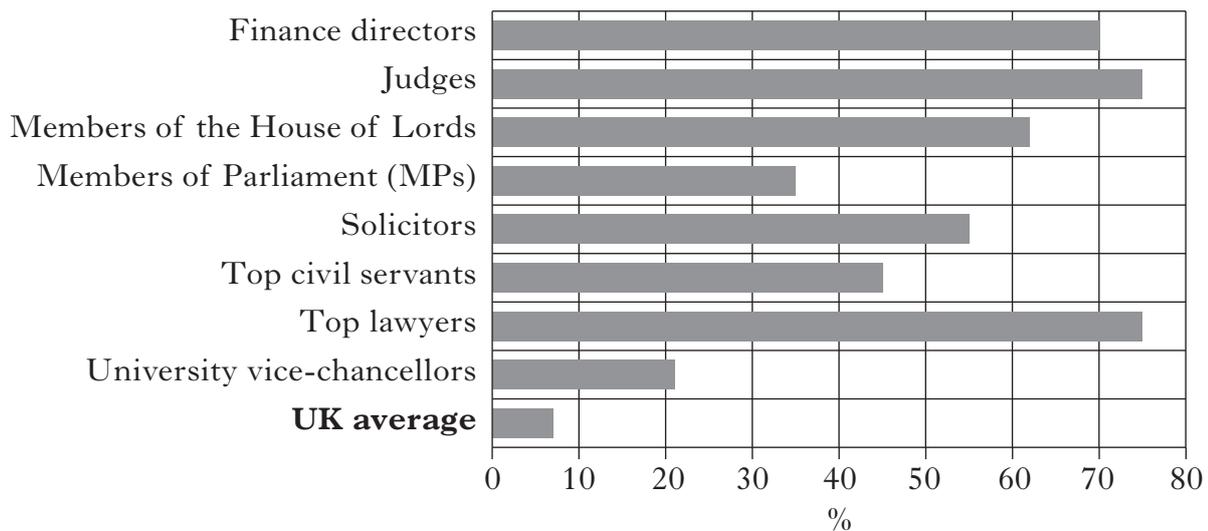
**SOURCE C: STATISTICAL INFORMATION**

**SOURCE C1 Percentage (%) of students on degree courses from working-class backgrounds at selected Scottish universities 2008–09**



Source: Adapted from Higher Education Statistics Agency

**SOURCE C2 Percentage (%) of individuals in selected professional occupations who attended fee-paying private schools**



Source: Adapted from <http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/media/227102/fair-access.pdf>

**SOURCE C: (CONTINUED)**

**SOURCE C3 Views of young people in percentage (%) on best way government could help them enter a professional career in percentage (%)**

What do you think would be the best way to help more young people enter a professional career?				
	More financial support	Better advice and information	More work experience opportunities	Reduce discrimination
Young people	57%	22%	18%	3%

Source: Adapted from  
[http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/media/213698/national\\_youth\\_survey.pdf](http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/media/213698/national_youth_survey.pdf)

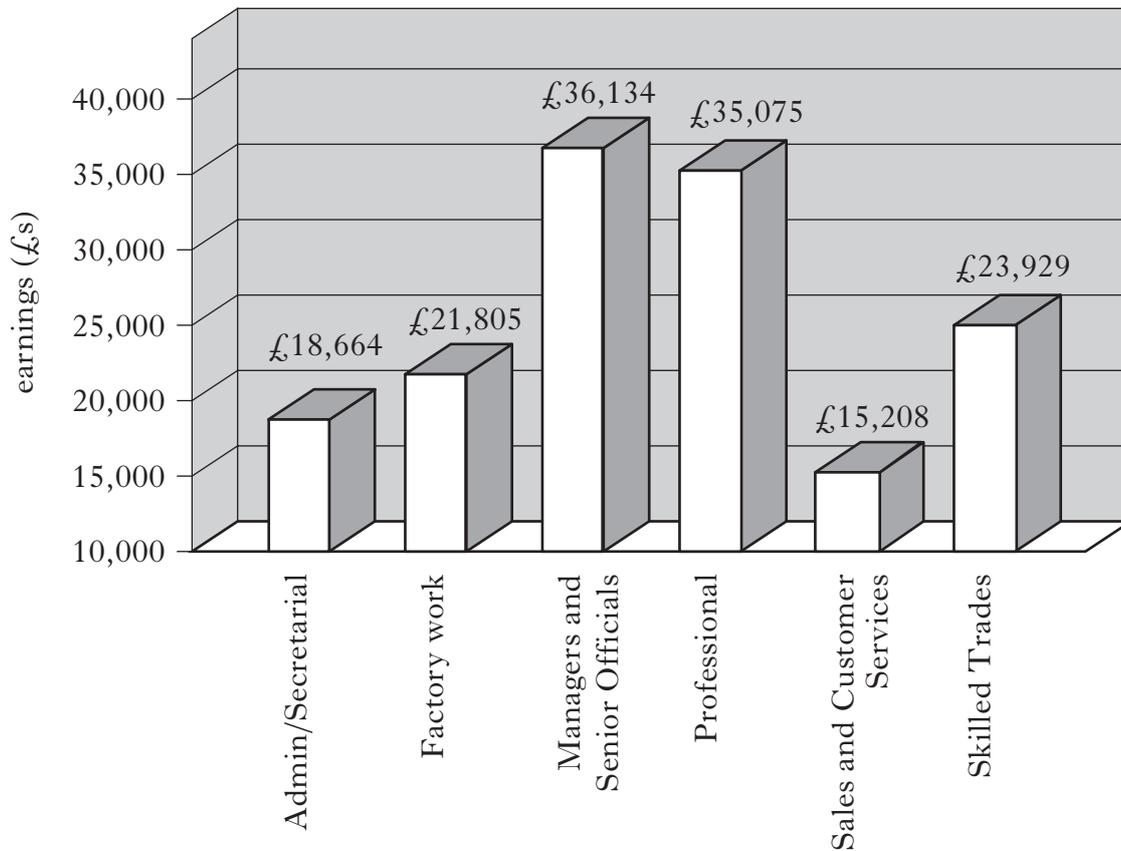
**SOURCE C4 Percentage (%) of students from working-class backgrounds at UK universities by course choice (selected) 2008–09**

Biological Science	33.8
Business and Administrative Studies	35.3
Computer Sciences	39.9
Education	41.4
Law	34.1
Medicine, Dentistry and Veterinary Science	18.3
Social Sciences	31.1
Subjects allied to Medicine	37.1
<b>Average across all subjects</b>	<b>32.3</b>

Source: Adapted from Higher Education Statistics Agency

**SOURCE C: (CONTINUED)**

**SOURCE C5 Median\* full-time earnings (£s) by occupation in Scotland, 2009**



\*Median—Point at which 50% of earnings are above and 50% of earnings below.

Source: <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Labour-Market/TrendEarnings>

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## DECISION MAKING EXERCISE

## QUESTIONS

Questions 1 to 4 are based on Sources A to C on pages 2–6. Answer Questions 1 to 4 before attempting Question 5.

In Questions 1 to 4, use only the Sources described in each question.

**Question 1**

Use **only** Source C1 and Source A.

To what extent does the evidence support the view of Stephen Morris? **3**

**Question 2**

Use **only** Source C2 and Source A.

Why might Stephen Morris be accused of exaggeration? **2**

**Question 3**

Use **only** Source C3 and Source B.

Why might Gillian Gilbert be accused of exaggeration? **2**

**Question 4**

Use **only** Source C4, C5 and Source B.

To what extent does the evidence support the view of Gillian Gilbert? **3**

**(10)**

## Question 5

**DECISION MAKING EXERCISE (DME)**

You are an education policy adviser. You have been asked to prepare a report for the Scottish Government Cabinet Secretary for Education and Life Long Learning in which you recommend or reject *Breakthrough*, a proposal to set aside at least 33% of places at Scottish universities for young people from a working-class background.

Your answer should be written in a style appropriate to a report.

Your report should:

- recommend or reject the proposal to set aside at least 33% of places at Scottish universities for young people from a working-class background
- provide arguments to support your decision
- identify and comment on any arguments which may be presented by those who oppose your decision
- refer to all the Sources provided

AND

- **must** include relevant background knowledge.

The written and statistical sources which are provided are:

**SOURCE A:** Genuine Educational Equality

**SOURCE B:** One Inequality Replaces Another

**SOURCE C:** Statistical Information

(20)

**Total: 30 marks**

[END OF QUESTION PAPER]