



Higher Modern Studies

Course code:	C849 76
Course assessment code:	X849 76
SCQF:	level 6 (24 SCQF credit points)
Valid from:	session 2018–19

This document provides detailed information about the course and course assessment to ensure consistent and transparent assessment year on year. It describes the structure of the course and the course assessment in terms of the skills, knowledge and understanding that are assessed.

This document is for teachers and lecturers and contains all the mandatory information you need to deliver the course.

The information in this publication may be reproduced in support of SQA qualifications only on a non-commercial basis. If it is reproduced, SQA must be clearly acknowledged as the source. If it is to be reproduced for any other purpose, written permission must be obtained from permissions@sqa.org.uk.

This edition: April 2018 (version 1.0)

© Scottish Qualifications Authority 2013, 2018

Contents

Course overview	1
Course rationale	2
Purpose and aims	2
Who is this course for?	2
Course content	3
Skills, knowledge and understanding	3
Skills for learning, skills for life and skills for work	6
Course assessment	7
Course assessment structure: question paper	7
Course assessment structure: assignment	9
Grading	12
Equality and inclusion	13
Further information	14

Course overview

The course consists of 24 SCQF credit points which includes time for preparation for course assessment. The notional length of time for candidates to complete the course is 160 hours.

The course assessment has three components.

Component	Marks	Duration
Component 1: question paper 1	52	1 hour and 45 minutes
Component 2: question paper 2	28	1 hour and 15 minutes
Component 3: assignment	30	1 hour and 30 minutes — see 'Course assessment' section

Recommended entry	Progression
<p>Entry to this course is at the discretion of the centre.</p> <p>Candidates should have achieved the National 5 Modern Studies course or equivalent qualifications and/or experience prior to starting this course.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ Advanced Higher Modern Studies course◆ further study, employment and/or training

Conditions of award

The grade awarded is based on the total marks achieved across all course assessment components.

Course rationale

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

Every course provides opportunities for candidates to develop breadth, challenge and application. The focus and balance of assessment is tailored to each subject area.

This course encourages candidates to develop a greater understanding of the contemporary world and their place in it. They have opportunities to develop important attitudes such as respect for the values, beliefs and cultures of others; openness to new thinking and ideas; and a sense of responsibility and global citizenship.

The course emphasises the development and application of skills. The focus on evaluating sources and making decisions develops candidates' thinking skills, as well as skills in literacy and numeracy. Investigative and critical thinking activities give candidates opportunities to gain important experience in contributing to group work and working on their own.

Purpose and aims

The course uses a multidisciplinary approach to develop candidates' knowledge and understanding of contemporary political and social issues in local, Scottish, United Kingdom (UK) and international contexts. Candidates develop the skills to interpret and participate in the social and political processes they encounter in their lives.

Candidates develop a range of research, analytical and evaluating skills, and an understanding of:

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

Who is this course for?

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

Course content

The course consists of three areas of study: Democracy in Scotland and the United Kingdom; Social issues in the United Kingdom; and International issues. There is considerable flexibility in the themes which can be studied within each area in order to allow for personalisation and choice.

Skills, knowledge and understanding

Skills, knowledge and understanding for the course

The following provides a broad overview of the subject skills, knowledge and understanding developed in the course:

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

Skills, knowledge and understanding for the course assessment

The following provides details of skills, knowledge and understanding sampled in the course assessment:

Question paper 1

This question paper has three sections. There are options in each section to allow opportunities for personalisation and choice. This question paper samples from the knowledge and understanding as follows:

Section 1: Democracy in Scotland and the United Kingdom
Candidates study aspects of the democratic political system in the UK including the place of Scotland within this system. Relevant case studies are used from either Scotland or the UK, or both Scotland and the UK.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ possible alternatives for the governance of Scotland◆ implications of the UK's decision to leave the European Union (EU)◆ effectiveness of parliamentary representatives in holding government to account◆ strengths and weaknesses of different electoral systems used in elections within the UK◆ factors which influence voting behaviour including class, age and media◆ ways in which citizens can influence government decision-making, including pressure groups
Section 2: Social issues in the United Kingdom
Candidates have a choice of social issue contexts for study. These focus on either social inequality or crime and the law.
Option 1: social inequality
In the social inequality context, candidates focus on the impact of social inequality on any relevant group.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ reasons why income/wealth inequality exists◆ reasons why health inequalities exist◆ effect of inequality on a group or groups in society◆ individualist/collectivist debate◆ effectiveness of measures taken to tackle inequalities, including government measures
Option 2: crime and the law
In the crime and the law context, candidates focus on relevant and contemporary aspects of crime, criminology and the law. Appropriate references are made to Scotland, the UK, or both Scotland and the UK.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ legal rights and responsibilities of UK citizens◆ causes and theories of crime◆ impact of crime on victims, offenders and their families◆ social and economic impact of crime on wider society◆ effectiveness of custodial and non-custodial responses to crime

Section 3: International issues

Candidates have a choice of international issue contexts for study. These focus on either the study of a major world power or the study of a significant contemporary world issue.

Option 1: world powers

The study of a world power focuses on political and socio-economic issues. Candidates may choose a major world power from any members of the G20 group of countries, including the EU, but excluding the UK.

- ◆ extent to which the political system allows democratic participation
- ◆ political institutions and their ability to dominate government decision-making
- ◆ socio-economic inequality and its impact on a specific group in society
- ◆ effectiveness of government responses to socio-economic inequality
- ◆ a world power's international influence

Option 2: world issues

The study of a world issue focuses on any significant recent issue or conflict which extends beyond the boundaries of any single country, and has an impact which may be regional or global.

- ◆ social, economic and political factors which have caused the issue
- ◆ effects of the issue on individuals, families and communities
- ◆ effects of the issue on the governments involved and the wider international community
- ◆ effectiveness of individual countries in tackling the issue
- ◆ effectiveness of international organisations in tackling the issue

Question paper 2

The skills of analysing, evaluating and synthesising evidence are assessed in question paper 2.

Assignment

Candidates choose any modern studies topic or issue that refers to a contemporary political, social or international issue. Their choice is not constrained by the content of question paper 1.

Skills, knowledge and understanding included in the course are appropriate to the SCQF level of the course. The SCQF level descriptors give further information on characteristics and expected performance at each SCQF level, and can be found on the SCQF website.

Skills for learning, skills for life and skills for work

This course helps candidates to develop broad, generic skills. These skills are based on [SQA's Skills Framework: Skills for Learning, Skills for Life and Skills for Work](#) and draw from the following main skills areas:

1 Literacy

1.1 Reading

1.2 Writing

2 Numeracy

2.3 Information handling

4 Employability, enterprise and citizenship

4.6 Citizenship

5 Thinking skills

5.3 Applying

5.4 Analysing and evaluating

Teachers and lecturers must build these skills into the course at an appropriate level, where there are suitable opportunities.

Course assessment

Course assessment is based on the information provided in this document.

The course assessment meets the key purposes and aims of the course by addressing:

- ◆ breadth — drawing on knowledge and skills from across the course
- ◆ challenge — requiring greater depth or extension of knowledge and/or skills
- ◆ application — requiring application of knowledge and/or skills in practical or theoretical contexts as appropriate

This enables candidates to draw on, extend and apply the skills, knowledge and understanding they have acquired during the course.

Course assessment structure: question paper

Question paper 1

52 marks

This question paper has a total mark allocation of 52 marks. This is 47% of the overall marks for the course assessment.

This question paper allows candidates to demonstrate application of the following skills and breadth of knowledge and understanding:

- ◆ giving detailed explanations, analysis and evaluation of complex political, social and economic issues

Candidates answer three questions which assess knowledge and understanding and higher-order skills of analysis and evaluation: two questions worth 20 marks and one question worth 12 marks.

Question paper 1 has three sections:

Section 1: Democracy in Scotland and the United Kingdom

Candidates answer one extended-response question, from a choice of three.

Section 2: Social issues in the United Kingdom

Candidates select either social inequality or crime and the law, and answer one extended-response question, from a choice of two.

Section 3: International issues

Candidates select either world powers or world issues, and answer one extended-response question, from a choice of two.

Setting, conducting and marking the question paper

This question paper is set and marked by SQA, and conducted in centres under conditions specified for external examinations by SQA.

Candidates have 1 hour and 45 minutes to complete this question paper.

Question paper 2

28 marks

This question paper has a total mark allocation of 28 marks. This is 26% of the overall marks for the course assessment.

This question paper allows candidates to demonstrate application of the following skills:

- ◆ detecting and explaining the degree of objectivity using a range of sources of information
- ◆ drawing and supporting complex conclusions using a range of sources of information
- ◆ evaluating the reliability of a range of sources of information

This question paper has three mandatory questions:

Question 1

Candidates answer a question which assesses the skill of detecting and explaining the degree of objectivity. This question consists of between two and four sources of information. Sources may be written, numerical, graphical or pictorial. This question is worth 10 marks.

Question 2

Candidates answer a question which assesses the skill of drawing and supporting conclusions. This question consists of between two and four sources of information. Sources may be written, numerical, graphical or pictorial. This question is worth 10 marks.

Question 3

Candidates answer a question which assesses the skill of evaluating the reliability of sources of information. This question consists of three sources of information. Sources may be written, numerical, graphical or pictorial. This question is worth 8 marks.

Setting, conducting and marking the question paper

This question paper is set and marked by SQA, and conducted in centres under conditions specified for external examinations by SQA.

Candidates have 1 hour and 15 minutes to complete this question paper.

Specimen question papers for Higher courses are published on SQA's website. These illustrate the standard, structure and requirements of the question papers candidates sit. The specimen papers also include marking instructions.

Course assessment structure: assignment

Assignment

30 marks

The assignment has a total mark allocation of 30 marks. This is 27% of the overall marks for the course assessment.

Assignment overview

The assignment allows candidates to demonstrate the following skills, knowledge and understanding:

- ◆ identifying a modern studies issue about which there are alternative views
- ◆ researching a modern studies issue, using a range of sources of information
- ◆ synthesising and analysing information from a range of sources
- ◆ evaluating the usefulness and reliability of a range of sources of information
- ◆ reaching a decision on the issue studied
- ◆ showing detailed knowledge and understanding of the issue to support the decision reached
- ◆ showing an awareness of alternatives to the decision
- ◆ communicating information using the conventions of a report

Setting, conducting and marking the assignment

The assignment is set by teachers and lecturers within SQA guidelines. SQA provides a brief detailing how candidate evidence is assessed. Candidates choose any contemporary modern studies topic or issue to research. Evidence is submitted to SQA for external marking. All marking is quality assured by SQA.

The assignment has two stages:

- ◆ research
- ◆ production of evidence

Candidates undertake the research stage at any appropriate point in the course, normally when they have developed the necessary skills, knowledge and understanding.

In the research stage, candidates choose a topic which allows them to analyse a contemporary issue. They research the issue and organise their findings to address it, using the Modern Studies research sheet to support them in the production of evidence.

Assessment conditions

Time

The research stage is designed to be completed over a notional period of 8 hours. Candidates have 1 hour and 30 minutes to complete the production of evidence for assessment. This must be done in one sitting. Candidates complete the production of evidence stage in time to meet the submission date set by SQA.

Supervision, control and authentication

The research stage is conducted under some supervision and control. This means that although candidates may complete part of the work outwith the learning and teaching setting, teachers and lecturers must put in place processes to monitor progress and ensure that the work is the candidate's own, and that plagiarism has not taken place. For example:

- ◆ interim progress meetings with candidates
- ◆ questioning
- ◆ candidate's record of activity/progress
- ◆ teacher or lecturer observation

Group work approaches are acceptable as part of the research stage. However, there must be clear evidence for each candidate to show that they have met the evidence requirements.

The production of evidence stage is conducted under a high degree of supervision and control. This means that candidates must:

- ◆ be in direct sight of the teacher or lecturer or other responsible person during the assessment
- ◆ not communicate with each other
- ◆ have access only to the Modern Studies research sheet

Resources

During the research stage, there are no restrictions on the resources to which candidates may have access.

During the production of evidence stage, candidates have access only to the Modern Studies research sheet. The purpose of the research sheet is to help candidates use their evidence and references, collected during the research stage, to address their chosen topic or issue. Research sheets are not assessed but must be submitted to SQA with candidates' assignments.

Reasonable assistance

Teachers and lecturers must exercise their professional responsibility to ensure that evidence submitted by a candidate is their own work.

The term 'reasonable assistance' is used to try to balance the need for support with the need to avoid giving too much assistance. If a candidate requires more than what is thought to be 'reasonable assistance', they may not be ready for assessment, or it may be that they have been entered for the wrong level of qualification.

Reasonable assistance may be given on a generic basis to a class or group of candidates, for example, advice on how to develop a project plan. It may also be given to candidates on an individual basis. When reasonable assistance is given on a one-to-one basis in the context of something that a candidate has already produced or demonstrated, there is a danger that it becomes support for assessment, and teachers and lecturers need to be aware that this may be going beyond reasonable assistance.

Candidates must work on their research with minimum support from teachers or lecturers. In the research stage, reasonable assistance may include:

- ◆ directing candidates to the instructions for candidates
- ◆ clarifying instructions/requirements of the task
- ◆ advising candidates on the choice of topic or issue
- ◆ guiding candidates on the likely availability and accessibility of resources for their chosen topic or issue
- ◆ advising candidates on possible sources of information
- ◆ arranging visits to enable gathering of evidence
- ◆ interim progress checks

Candidates must complete the production of evidence independently. However, reasonable assistance may be provided prior to the production of evidence taking place. This may include advising candidates of the nature and volume of specified resources which may be used to support the production of evidence.

At any stage, reasonable assistance does not include:

- ◆ providing the topic or issue for the candidate
- ◆ directing candidates to specific resources to be used
- ◆ providing model answers
- ◆ providing detailed feedback on drafts, including marking

Evidence to be gathered

The following evidence is required for this assessment:

- ◆ candidate assignment evidence
- ◆ Modern Studies research sheet: this must be no more than two sides of A4 paper

Volume

There is no word count.

Grading

Candidates' overall grades are determined by their performance across the course assessment. The course assessment is graded A–D on the basis of the total mark for all course assessment components.

Grade description for C

For the award of grade C, candidates will typically have demonstrated successful performance in relation to the skills, knowledge and understanding for the course.

Grade description for A

For the award of grade A, candidates will typically have demonstrated a consistently high level of performance in relation to the skills, knowledge and understanding for the course.

Equality and inclusion

This course is designed to be as fair and as accessible as possible with no unnecessary barriers to learning or assessment.

For guidance on assessment arrangements for disabled candidates and/or those with additional support needs, please follow the link to the assessment arrangements web page: www.sqa.org.uk/assessmentarrangements.

Further information

The following reference documents provide useful information and background.

- ◆ [Higher Modern Studies subject page](#)
- ◆ [Assessment arrangements web page](#)
- ◆ [Building the Curriculum 3–5](#)
- ◆ [Guide to Assessment](#)
- ◆ [Guidance on conditions of assessment for coursework](#)
- ◆ [SQA Skills Framework: Skills for Learning, Skills for Life and Skills for Work](#)
- ◆ [Coursework Authenticity: A Guide for Teachers and Lecturers](#)
- ◆ [Educational Research Reports](#)
- ◆ [SQA Guidelines on e-assessment for Schools](#)
- ◆ [SQA e-assessment web page](#)

The SCQF framework, level descriptors and handbook are available on the SCQF website.

Administrative information

Published: April 2018 (version 1.0)

History of changes

Version	Description of change	Date

Note: you are advised to check SQA's website to ensure you are using the most up-to-date version of this document.

© Scottish Qualifications Authority 2013, 2018