



Course Report 2015

Subject	Modern Studies
Level	National 5

The statistics used in this report have been compiled before the completion of any Post Results Services.

This report provides information on the performance of candidates which it is hoped will be useful to teachers, lecturers and assessors in their preparation of candidates for future examinations. It is intended to be constructive and informative and to promote better understanding. It would be helpful to read this report in conjunction with the published assessment and marking instructions for the examination.

Section 1: Comments on the Assessment

Component 1: Question paper

The question paper has a total of 60 marks (75% of the overall Course total) and is completed in 1 hour 45 minutes.

The question paper proved very accessible and there was little evidence of candidates being presented at the wrong level. Both skills-based questions and knowledge-based questions were answered to a high standard by candidates.

The question paper has three sections, each allowing candidate choice. The most commonly chosen options were Part A, Part D and Part E. Candidate performance in Section 1 and 3 showed very little difference between the two optional 'Parts'. In Section 2, candidates performed better in Part D than in Part C.

Component 2: Assignment

The assignment has a total of 20 marks (25% of the overall Course total). It consisted of a written report, based on the individual research of the candidate and written up under supervision in 1 hour.

The assignment proved very accessible for candidates. The majority performed well and had been effectively prepared and advised by centres.

In the 'Research topic/issue' section, the majority of candidates scored full marks. Some did not gain credit as their answer was simply copied from their research evidence sheets.

In the 'Research methods' section, candidates scored highly, though some responses were generic in nature and made little or no specific reference to their own research.

The 'Research findings' and the 'Research conclusions' sections were sometimes copied from source sheets. Some candidates confused these sections and repeated their responses.

Most candidates used the research evidence sheets appropriately. A minority used these as a plan and, as a result, sometimes failed to gain credit due to copying.

Section 2: Comments on candidate performance

Component 1: Question paper

Candidate responses to the question paper were very pleasing. Very few candidates had been presented at an inappropriate level. A very small number gained fewer than 20 marks. This is testament to the quality of teaching in centres and the accessibility of the paper.

Very few candidates attempted all six parts of the paper, and only a small number completed both options in any of the sections. However, there are still a small number of candidates who are answering the knowledge questions in a different part to the skills question and are therefore losing marks.

Responses to knowledge questions were, at times, disappointing, especially in the International Issues section, where some candidates provided very little specific exemplification either about the World Power or the World Issue they had studied.

Skills questions were generally well handled and showed that candidates had been well prepared. However, attention should be paid to the Selective in the Use of Facts question as this is where candidates are weakest.

There was little evidence that candidates experienced difficulty in completing the question paper within the allotted time, indicating that the change to the time allocated had been successful.

Component 2: Assignment

Overall, candidates performed well in the assignment. The vast majority chose a relevant Modern Studies topic to research, however there was some evidence that candidates had chosen a topic that would have been more suited to a History assignment.

The vast majority of candidates scored two marks for the first section. Some lost marks by copying answers from their source sheets.

The second section was completed well. Many candidates successfully analysed the effectiveness of the research methods they had selected and provided appropriate evidence of their research methods, both primary and secondary.

Section three was also completed well by most candidates. However, there were still a significant number of candidates who gained no credit here due to directly copying from their research sheet.

Section four was completed well by many candidates. However, there was evidence that some candidates struggled in relation to drawing conclusions based on their research. A number of candidates simply repeated findings, whilst others gained no marks due to directly copying from research sheets.

The main reasons why candidates failed to attract marks in the assignment were: copying from research evidence sheets, inappropriate topics, and generic answers that did not refer to their own research.

Section 3: Areas in which candidates performed well

Component 1: Question paper

A1: Candidates scored highly and demonstrated excellent knowledge of council services and were often able to provide relevant, contemporary examples.

A3 & B6: In the 'Options' questions, candidates performed well. The majority of candidates clearly identified the option they had selected and went on to support their choice by providing relevant information from within and between sources. There was also evidence of an increased use of evaluative comments in relation to the statistical information.

C9 & D12: The majority of candidates successfully made relevant conclusions in relation to the prompts given and supported these conclusions well with source evidence. Many candidates achieved the 3 marks available per conclusion by combining relevant information from different sources.

D10: Candidates had a very good knowledge of Scottish courts and the different types of punishment they are afforded.

D11: Candidates were clearly able to explain the factors causing crime in the UK, with many supporting their answer with relevant, contemporary examples.

Component 2: Assignment

Research topic/issue

The majority of candidates presented this section as a 'Hypothesis' and 'Aims'. Although this is not a requirement, it is good practice and allowed many candidates to score full marks.

Research methods

Many candidates scored highly in this section. Most used the prompt provided on the template and provided advantages and disadvantages of their sources as well as suggested improvement and alterations for future research.

Research findings

Many candidates provided relevant knowledge regarding their topic and successfully made reference to sources used in their research, which may or may not have been included in the two they analysed in the previous section.

Research conclusions

Candidates who scored best in this section had generally used the 'Hypothesis and Aims' approach and managed to provide conclusions backed by relevant evidence.

Section 4: Areas which candidates found demanding

Component 1: Question paper

A2 & B5: Many candidates simply described the ways in which people participate in pressure groups, trade unions or the media rather than explaining why they participate.

C8: Candidates often described how the group they had selected faced inequality rather than explain why the group was suffering from inequality.

E13: A number of candidates failed to answer this question, whilst others provided a very basic answer that focused on a single aspect of impact, eg culture. Some candidates failed to stay within the confines of the question, ie 'Describe, **in detail, two ways ...**'

E14: Many candidates simply described the groups that are poorly represented in government rather than explaining why they are poorly represented.

E15 & F18: Many candidates did not perform well in this question. Some candidates simply copied large sections of the source information without actually showing whether it was selective or not. Furthermore, candidates failed to use the scaffolding provided and it was impossible to tell which evidence supported the view and which opposed it.

In all types of skills questions, some candidates failed to structure their answers in a logical way and this resulted in markers being unable to give credit. For example:

- ◆ Conclusions — some candidates copied a lot of information but did not make it clear which bullet point they were referring to.
- ◆ Options — some candidates wrote long answers including many quotes and references to the sources but did not make it clear which option they had chosen.

F17: Many candidates simply described the attempts of the International Organisation they had selected to resolve issues and conflicts, rather than explain the reasons why the attempts of the organisation had succeeded or failed.

Component 2: Assignment

Research topic/issue

Some candidates couldn't access the full range of marks in the assignment as a result of the topic/issue they had chosen. Some topics were too historical, geographical or scientific. Some others focused on issues that would have been better suited to business education or Religious and Moral Education.

Research methods

Many candidates made little or no specific reference to their own research. Many provided what appeared to be memorised list-type answers of advantages and disadvantages of 'generic' research methods such as 'surveys'. While this did attract some credit, candidates should have referred to 'their survey' specifically. In this section a small number of candidates did not gain credit as they copied large amount of evidence for their answers from their research evidence sheets. Furthermore, those candidates who did not provide the research evidence sheet could not access the full range of marks available.

Research findings/Research conclusions

Many candidates confused these two sections and wrote very similar answers for both. Candidates who scored best provided points of knowledge which did not directly answer their 'Aims' or seek to prove/disprove their 'Hypothesis' in the findings section.

Candidates who made no reference to their own research in the findings section could not access the full range of marks available.

Section 5: Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

Component 1: Question paper

Centres should re-emphasise the importance of expanding knowledge answers using specific 'real world' current examples.

Candidates should be reminded that when knowledge questions ask for 'two ways', writing more should be avoided as only the best two points in the answer will gain credit.

Candidates should be encouraged to 'compare', show changes over time, show differences between ethnic groups/genders/countries etc, and to make evaluative comments when analysing information in skills questions.

Candidates should always explicitly state, in their skills answers, which option they have chosen, which of the bullet pointed conclusions they are addressing, and whether they are supporting or opposing a point of view.

Centres should ensure that they are entirely clear about the requirements of the Course Assessment Specification and ensure that the mandatory content has been delivered to pupils.

Component 2: Assignment

Topics must clearly address a relevant, contemporary Modern Studies issue.

Research evidence is intended to provide evidence that the candidate has carried out their own research. Candidates should be discouraged from using the two A4 sheets as a 'Plan'. Furthermore centres should emphasise to candidates that direct copying large amounts text/narrative from the source sheets will attract no credit, and where research evidence is not identified, full marks cannot be achieved.

Candidates who have used the Hypothesis and Aims approach should be encouraged to address these in the 'Conclusions' section of their report.

Centres should advise candidates to use the 'findings' section of the report to demonstrate knowledge of their topic which may or may not directly answer their aims or prove/disprove their Hypothesis.

Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2014	9317
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Number of resulted entries in 2015	11524
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Statistical information: Performance of candidates

Distribution of Course awards including grade boundaries

Distribution of Course awards	%	Cum. %	Number of candidates	Lowest mark
Maximum Mark - 80				
A	33.9%	33.9%	3911	63
B	23.6%	57.5%	2715	55
C	18.7%	76.2%	2159	47
D	7.0%	83.2%	804	43
No award	16.8%	-	1935	-

In 2014 grade boundaries were raised to take account of specific issues. For 2015 the intention was to align assessments with notional values of 50% for a grade C and 70% for a grade A.

However, grade boundaries were adjusted from notional to take account of the following:

- The Question Paper was found to be less demanding than intended, an adjustment of 4 marks was made.
- The Assignment was found to not be functioning at the required SCQF level therefore an adjustment of 3 marks was made.