

Modern Studies

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Changes to assessment at National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher

As announced by the Deputy First Minister in September 2016, units and unit assessments are being removed from National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher courses on a phased basis over three years:

- National 5 from 2017–18
- Higher from 2018–19
- Advanced Higher from 2019–20

For more information, including a Q&A on the implications of these changes, please visit our website at www.sqa.org.uk/nqchanges

Units that were previously part of National 5 courses

The units that were previously part of National 5 courses are now freestanding units at SCQF level 5. They can no longer be used to contribute to the achievement of a National 5 course.

We will remove all references to National 5 courses from the unit specifications, unit support notes and unit assessment support packs in due course, and the unit support notes will be added to the unit specifications as an appendix. The unit specifications will also be relocated to a new freestanding units web page for each subject.

Further information on the timescales for this will be provided in our weekly Centre News newsletter.

Changes to assessment in National 5

The National 5 Modern Studies course is now assessed through the following components:

Component	Marks
question paper	80
assignment	20

Clarification of course content in the National 5 course

The course content has been reviewed and refined to provide greater clarity on assessment coverage.

Full details of the revised course content can be found in the course specification on the [National 5 Modern Studies subject page](#).

Changes to assessment in Higher courses from session 2018–19

Units and unit assessments will be removed from Higher courses from session 2018–19 and we have started our review of the Higher course assessments. For this, we are working closely with our National Qualifications Support Teams (NQSTs) for each subject. Our NQSTs include teachers and lecturers who currently deliver National Courses, and representatives of professional associations. We will also meet with a sample of teachers to gauge their views on the proposed changes and the implications of these.

The publication of new and revised Higher materials will follow a similar timescale to National 5:

End of April 2018	Revised Higher course specifications
End of May to end of September 2018	Course support notes New/revised specimen question papers New/revised coursework assessment tasks

We will provide further information on what the changes to assessment are for each subject by the end of January 2018.

Conditions of assessment for coursework

To ensure fairness for all candidates, it is essential that the specified assessment conditions for coursework are consistently applied in all centres. The following documents detail the specific conditions that must be followed in each assessment:

- course specification
- course assessment specification (Higher and Advanced Higher only)
- coursework assessment task

In addition to these documents, you must also refer to the following document, which is available from the coursework section of the National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher web pages:

- [Guidance on conditions of assessment for coursework](#)

This document provides important information on the time and volume of assessment, the use of resources, and the supervision, control and authentication of assessment — including examples.

Changes to documents

Revised National 5 documents and assessment support materials

Following the removal of units and unit assessments from the National 5 Modern Studies course, we have strengthened the course assessment to ensure it assesses the full content of the course.

We have published a revised course specification and revised assessment support materials for the National 5 course, which detail the requirements of the revised course assessments from session 2017–18 onwards. The documents are available from the National 5 subject web pages at www.sqa.org.uk/nqsubjects. Further information on the changes to documents and assessment support materials is provided below.

Course specification

In April 2017, we published a revised course specification which provides detailed information about the National 5 course and course assessment, including the conditions of assessment that must be followed. The revised document was produced by merging the previous course specifications, course assessment specifications and general assessment information into a single, streamlined document. Course support notes have been added to the course specification as an appendix.

The National 5 Modern Studies course specification is available on the [National 5 Modern Studies subject page](#).

Specimen question paper

The specimen question paper and marking instructions have been revised to match the new assessment model, mark allocation and duration.

The question paper has 80 marks and the time for the examination is now 2 hours and 20 minutes. This allows more of the content of the course to be sampled in the examination.

Centres should note that the wording of the support/oppose question in the specimen question paper (page 07) should read:

‘Using Sources 1, 2 and 3, give reasons to **support** and **oppose** the view of Morag Watt.’

Centres should also note on page 03 of the marking instructions, the third bullet point for the conclusions question should read:

‘For full marks, four conclusions must be given.’

The National 5 Modern Studies specimen question paper is available on the [National 5 Modern Studies subject page](#).

Coursework assessment task

No change has been made to the assessment approach for the National 5 Modern Studies assignment however centres should acknowledge changes to the wording of the detailed marking instructions.

The coursework assessment task is available on the [National 5 Modern Studies subject page](#).

Changes to documents following Diet 2017

Advanced Higher Modern Studies specimen question paper/coursework assessment task

The marking grids and associated text for the question paper and the project–dissertation have been updated to provide clarification on the distribution of marks.

The specimen question paper marking instructions and coursework assessment task have been updated to reflect these changes.

The specimen question paper is available on the [National 5 Modern Studies subject page](#) and the assessment task is available on our secure website.

Supportive resources

National 5 audio presentation

We have published an audio presentation that focuses on the requirements of the revised National 5 course assessment.

You can access the audio presentation from the **CPD webinar/audio and support** tab on the [National 5 Modern Studies subject page](#).

Further information and guidance

Submission date — external assessment uplift

Please note that the 2017–18 uplift date for the externally assessed components are:

- 21 March 2018 National 5 assignment
- 19 April 2018 Higher assignment and Advanced Higher project–dissertation

Please refer to your SQA co-ordinator to ensure that all materials are prepared in time for uplift.

Understanding Standards materials

There is a range of material available, including examples of candidate evidence with commentaries, as part of our Understanding Standards programme. This material is for teachers and lecturers to help them develop their understanding of the standards required for assessment. As new material is developed we will publish this information in our weekly Centre News.

Updated candidate evidence, along with commentaries explaining the marks awarded, will soon be available for National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher Modern Studies on our [Understanding Standards website](#).

Course reports

We strongly recommend that you read the annual course reports for the subject and levels you are teaching. These reports are produced following the annual diet of exams and are published by the end of October. The reports provide informed and valuable commentary on the assessment for each component in the course, and include a summary of:

- candidate performance in the course assessment
- areas in which candidates performed well
- areas which candidates found demanding

The reports also contain advice on preparing future candidates, and statistical data relating to grade boundaries. Course reports will be available from the relevant subject pages of our website at www.sqa.org.uk/nqsubjects.

Continuing professional development (CPD)

We will continue to offer subject-specific CPD support at a local authority, independent school or college level, subject to request. This involves an experienced SQA appointee providing advice and guidance on any areas of concern that are not already addressed by the Understanding Standards programme.

Please note that CPD requests should be made by the appropriate representative from the local authority, independent school or college. For each request we will agree with the representative the content to be covered and the most appropriate way to deliver the support, eg in person, by webinar or by video conference/teleconference.

CPD requests can be made at www.sqa.org.uk/cpdform

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