

## Modern Studies



Welcome to the first edition of our new-look subject update, which replaces the letter you would have received previously. This update complements our regular monthly and weekly communications, with more information relevant to your subject, and details of what we have been working on.

I would encourage you to make regular use of our subject pages, where you will find support documents, answers to **Common Questions**, and links to other areas of interest. Documents that must be treated confidentially can be found on our secure site and you can arrange access to these through your SQA Co-ordinator.

I hope you find the following update helpful, and please contact me if you have any questions.

**Hilary Rutherford**  
Qualifications Manager

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## Contacting the team

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## Updates

### National 5 assignment

The Course Assessment Task and the Instructions for Candidates have been revised in order to provide guidance and clarification of the requirements for the Resource Sheet for the National 5 assignment.

### Time extended for National 5 Modern Studies question paper

It has been agreed that the duration of the National 5 Modern Studies exam will be extended by 15 minutes so that, from 2015 onwards, candidates will have 1 hour and 45 minutes to complete the question paper. This follows feedback from practitioners and evidence gathered during a review of the 2014 exams. The 2015 exam timetable on SQA's website has now been updated to reflect this change.

For further information, please see the 'Updates and announcements' section of the **National 5 Modern Studies** web page.

### New Higher: example question papers

We will be publishing an additional example question paper for this Course. This will show you how existing past paper questions or items have been amended and adapted for use as support for Course assessment preparation. This will provide an additional support for centres, alongside the specimen question paper previously published and the guidance on the use of past papers document.

### Advanced Higher

The development of the new Advanced Higher Modern Studies Course is progressing with the support of the Subject Working Group and Qualifications Design Team. The new Advanced Higher Course will build on the strengths of the existing Advanced Higher Course.

Following advice from the Qualifications Design Team and Subject Working Group, some changes have been recommended to the draft Unit Specification for the Modern Studies: Contemporary Issues Unit. Some Assessment Standards have been removed. Assessment Standards have also been re-worded to highlight the key Modern Studies skills and to provide consistency between the Unit and question paper. The changes are as follows:

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| Previous draft Outcomes and Assessment Standards  | Revised Outcomes and Assessment Standards  |
|---|--|
| <p><b>Outcome 1 – Draw on factual and theoretical knowledge and understanding of complex political or social issues in the United Kingdom by:</b></p> <p>1.1 Showing knowledge and understanding, in depth, of a complex political or social issue.</p> <p>1.2 Making international comparisons and contrasts about a complex political or social issue.</p> <p>1.3 Analysing a complex political or social issue.</p>  | <p><b>Outcome 1 – Draw on knowledge and understanding to analyse complex political or social issues in the United Kingdom by:</b></p> <p>1.1 Analysing key aspects of a complex political or social issue.</p> <p>1.2 Making international comparisons regarding a complex political or social issue.</p>  |
| <p><b>Outcome 2 – Evaluate a wide range of evidence about complex political or social issues by:</b></p> <p>2.1 Analysing a wide range of evidence about a complex political or social issue.</p> <p>2.2 Synthesising information from a range of sources of evidence showing a variety of viewpoints.</p> <p>2.3 Making international comparisons and contrasts about a complex political or social issue.</p> <p>2.4 Using evidence to make judgements and reach conclusions.</p> | <p><b>Outcome 2 – Draw a well-reasoned conclusion about complex political or social issues using complex arguments in well-structured form drawing on a range of evidence by:</b></p> <p>2.1 Analysing and synthesising evidence to support well-structured and coherent arguments about a complex political or social issue.</p> <p>2.2 Evaluate relevant evidence to support a well-reasoned conclusion.</p> |
| <p><b>Outcome 3 – Critically evaluate a range of social science research methods by:</b></p> <p>3.1 Describing, explaining and analysing the research methodology used by social science in the context of a political or social issue.</p> <p>3.2 Commenting on moral and ethical issues arising from conducting social science research.</p>  | <p><b>Outcome 3 – Critically evaluate a range of social science research by:</b></p> <p>3.1 Evaluating research used by social science in the context of a political or social issue.</p> <p>3.2 Analysing moral and ethical issues arising from conducting social science research.</p>   |

These changes will be published in the final publication of all mandatory Course documents, in June 2015.

In the future we will publish the following documents to support implementation of the new Advanced Higher Course:

- ◆ Unit assessment support documents in three packages. Unit assessment support packs will illustrate each content area, beginning with 'Social Issues – Inequality' in October:
  - package 1 – October 2014
  - package 2 – February 2015

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— package 3 – April 2015

- ◆ the Advanced Higher Course comparison document, covering points of change and areas of stability, which will illustrate progression from Higher and provide further details on the Course content and assessment
- ◆ Guidance on the use of past paper questions for Advanced Higher
- ◆ Specimen question paper
- ◆ Coursework documentation
- ◆ final versions of all mandatory Course documents which will be published in June 2015

## Support and guidance

**Finalised Marking Instructions for the 2014 National 5 Modern studies question paper** will be published on the relevant subject pages of SQA's website.

**Guidance on performance in external Course assessments** and evidence generated for internal assessment is published annually. This includes Course Reports, External Assessment Reports and Verification Key Messages, all of which will be available in the autumn via the relevant subject pages of SQA's website. Internal Assessment Reports will not be published for the new National Courses.

The following Verification Key Messages are now available:

- ◆ **National 3 to National 5 Modern Studies**

Please take time to read the above report as it contains useful feedback on candidate performance in 2013–14.

## Staff News

A **Subject Implementation Manager** for Modern Studies (John Porter) has been appointed to support the delivery of the new qualifications. If you would like to get in touch with John, in the first instance please contact Hilary or Duncan.

## Looking ahead to 2014–15

We would like to express our gratitude and extend our thanks to all those who have undertaken duties in session 2013–14. We appreciate the work that all the teams carry out and look forward to continuing to work with them during session 2014–15.

### Recruitment opportunities

We are currently in the process of recruiting for a number of vacancies that we are looking to fill between now and February 2015. Vacancies include new and replacement appointments for the following roles in relation to the new qualifications:

- ◆ Advanced Higher Item Writers and Item Checkers
  - ◆ Advanced Higher Question Paper Reviewers and Question Paper Validator
  - ◆ Higher Principal Assessor
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- ◆ Higher Markers
  - ◆ National 5 Markers

For more information, please visit <http://www.sqa.org.uk/cfeappointeevacancies>

### **Understanding Standards**

Throughout session 2014–15, we will be publishing a range of Understanding Standards materials for both Unit and Course assessment. These materials will include candidate evidence with commentaries and can be used by centres for training and bench-marking purposes. We will also run Understanding Standards events for Unit assessment, for Nominees to share knowledge of Unit assessment with their colleagues. In addition, we will run Understanding Standards events for Course assessment for National 5, which will be open to all subject specialists.

Further information will follow in SQA's weekly and monthly centre updates.

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