

Modern Studies



This update contains information relevant to your subject and details of the support available to you.

We also publish updates on the new National Courses in the 'Updates and Announcements' section of the relevant [subject pages](#). 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. You can also sign up for 'My Alerts', SQA's e-mail update service, that notifies you whenever content you are interested in is added or updated on our website. Visit www.sqa.org.uk/myalerts to register.

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

Jillian Hendry
Qualifications Manager

The Qualifications Team

Jillian Hendry
Qualifications Manager

Duncan Cox
Qualifications Officer

Key messages from Diet 2014–15

Course Reports

We strongly recommend that you read the annual Course Reports for the subject(s) 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 comment 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 are available from the relevant [subject pages](#) of our website.

Verification key messages

Key messages from round 2 of verification in session 2014–15 were published over the summer. They are available from the relevant [subject pages](#), where you can access them from the 'Verification and Course Reports' heading in the 'Assessment Support' section.

Documents and assessment support materials

It is important that you read the full suite of documents for your Course, as well as those relating to assessment, and that you refer to the latest versions.

Information on documents and assessment support materials for National 1 to Advanced Higher can be found at www.sqa.org.uk/supportdocuments

National 3 to Higher documents

As we communicated in our May 2015 subject update, we updated some documents for Higher Modern Studies for use in session 2015–2016. These updates were made in April and May 2015 and the following revisions were made:

The mandatory content outlined in the Higher Course Assessment Specification has been amended to provide more clarity to centres.

You can find more details of these revisions in the [May 2015 subject update](#).

National 5 and Higher Coursework information

In response to feedback, and our experience and reflection of the marking processes during the 2015 examination diet, we have made some changes to the mark allocations for National 5 Modern Studies coursework. There is no change to the approach or content of the assignment nor is there any change to the total marks available. The changes relate to the number of marks available in each section of the assignment and how these marks are awarded.

A summary of the changes to the mark allocations is shown below. Further details on how the marks are awarded can be found in the General Assessment Information document on the subject page. More detailed marking instructions can be found in the Course Assessment Task document which is available on our secure website.

Section A: Choosing, with minimum support, an appropriate Modern Studies topic or issue. (0 marks) *(previously 2 marks)*

Section B: Evaluating the effectiveness of two research methods used, commenting on their strengths and weaknesses where appropriate. (10 marks) *(previously 8 marks)*

Section C: Drawing on knowledge and understanding to explain and analyse key features of the topic or issue. (6 marks)

Section D: Reaching a well-supported conclusion, supported by evidence, about the topic or issue. (4 marks)

Advanced Higher documents

In April and May 2015, we updated the mandatory documents and Course/Unit Support Notes for Advanced Higher.

Further information on these revisions can be found in the [May 2015 subject update](#).

You can also view the Notification of changes spreadsheets for National 3 to Higher, and Advanced Higher at www.sqa.org.uk/cfesubjectchanges

Advanced Higher Exemplar Question Papers

In December 2015, we will publish Exemplar Question Papers for all new Advanced Higher Courses that include a question paper as part of the Course assessment.

Advice and guidance

National 5 External Assessments

Please note the following change in relation to question wording:

Explain, **in detail**, reasons why First Past the Post is sometimes seen as an unfair system. You should give a **maximum** of three reasons in your answer.

For further information please refer to Appendix 1.

Advanced Higher Modern Studies dissertation titles

The exemplar dissertation titles list has been added to the Advanced Higher Modern Studies web page, under the Coursework Information tab. The titles list is for exemplification purposes; candidates may select their own title and if they wish they can submit the proposed title to SQA for feedback on its suitability. Please note that, where proposed titles are being submitted, these must be submitted by 1 November 2015. For further information please refer to the Advanced Higher subject page. Further information on the marking criteria for the dissertation can be found on our secure website.

Modern Studies Advanced Higher Unit assessment support

The following Unit assessment support packs have been produced:

Package 1

- Unit-by-Unit pack covering the *Modern Studies: Contemporary Issues* Unit
- Portfolio pack covering the *Researching Contemporary Issues* Unit

Package 2

- Unit-by-Unit pack covering the *Modern Studies: Contemporary Issues* Unit

Package 3

- Unit-by-Unit pack covering the *Modern Studies: Contemporary Issues* Unit
 - Portfolio pack covering the *Modern Studies: Contemporary Issues* Unit
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Coming up in 2015–16

Understanding Standards 2015–16

From the end of October 2015, we will publish further Understanding Standards packs for National 1 to Higher. These packs contain candidate evidence and commentaries for Unit assessment and internally assessed Components of Course assessment.

From November 2015 to January 2016, we will hold subject-specific Understanding Standards events for teachers and lecturers. The main focus of these events will be on Course assessment at Higher. Understanding Standards events for Higher Modern Studies will take place on the following dates:

- 27 November 2015, Glasgow
- 30 November 2015, Edinburgh
- 11 December 2015, Aberdeen

Materials from the recent Nominee training events will also be published on our website.

For more information, visit www.sqa.org.uk/understandingstandards

Details of the Understanding Standards materials for each subject are available from the [subject pages](#)

National 4 Added Value Units

You now have the option of developing your own National 4 Added Value Unit assessments for use with candidates.

Please note that this is not a requirement and you can continue to use SQA-produced Added Value Unit assessments. Most SQA-produced Added Value Unit assessments already allow considerable flexibility in the choice of a context for the assessment, while some provide a context that you can change.

If you choose to develop your own Added Value Unit assessment, we strongly advise submitting it to us for prior verification before using it with candidates.

Further information can be found at www.sqa.org.uk/unitassessment

Marker recruitment opportunities for 2016

We are now accepting Marker applications from teaching professionals to contribute to the 2016 examination diet. If you are interested in joining us as a Marker please visit the [appointee opportunities](#) section of our website where you will find a marker advert for all subjects and levels, with details of the role.

Our current Markers will confirm to you that the experience of marking helps increase their awareness of the demands of Course assessment and that marking is excellent professional and personal development.

Please check www.sqa.org.uk/appointees regularly for other appointee opportunities which may be of interest to you.

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Contact us

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Appendix 1

Modern Studies, National 5 and Higher, External Assessment Question Guidance

Please note the following change in relation to examination question wording that will be used in the **2016** question papers.

National 5

Explain question (6 marks)

Candidates will be required to explain two reasons in this question. A candidate who explains more than two reasons will be credited with their **best** two reasons. An example question with revised wording is given below:

People in Scotland can participate in society in many ways.

Explain, in detail, **two** reasons why some people participate in one of the following:

- Pressure groups
- Trade unions
- The media

(6)

Explain question (8 marks)

Candidates will be required to explain a maximum of three reasons in this question. A candidate who explains more than three reasons will be credited with their **best** three. As a single explanation can be awarded up to 4 marks, full marks can be achieved by a candidate who only explains two reasons. An example question with revised wording is given below:

There are many groups in the UK which experience inequality.

Explain, in detail, the reasons why one or more groups you have studied experiences inequality in the UK. You should give a **maximum of three** reasons in your answer. (8)

Higher

Source questions 'Objectivity'

A further prompt will be added to this question to remind candidates that up to 2 marks are available for an evaluation of the usefulness or reliability of the sources. The following wording will be included:

'In your answer you may wish to evaluate the reliability of the sources.'
