



# **Advanced Higher Modern Studies**

**Approved list of dissertations**

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# Introduction

This list of titles applies to the project–dissertation for Advanced Higher Modern Studies. The titles list is neither final nor definitive but is designed to exemplify suitable questions/hypothesis.

If centres wish to present dissertation titles which are not listed in this document, they may submit their proposed titles to SQA by 1 December. Further details are available on the [Modern Studies page of SQA's website](#). This service is advisory in nature.

**There is no need for centres to seek approval for titles which merely refine the issue in some way.**

# Area of Study 1: Political issues

## Topic A: Power and Influence

### **Influences on the political process, including interest groups and the media**

Lobbying corrupts the political process.

Interest groups exert a positive influence on the democratic process.

Outsider groups exert greater influence than insider groups.

Direct action is a legitimate course of action.

Direct action is a threat to the values of democracy.

Interest groups have more significant influence in the USA than the UK.

When it comes to interest groups, size is all that matters.

The media plays a key role in the political process.

An independent media is necessary for democracy.

Public service broadcasting ensures a politically impartial media.

Concentrated media ownership damages democracy.

The influence of newspapers has declined in line with their circulation.

Social media is the most influential media format on elections.

Television is still king when it comes to influencing elections and voting behaviour.

The influence of social media on politics is over-exaggerated.

A political leader's greatest ally is the media.

Radical political movements have grown via social media online communities.

Social media is an echo chamber which only reinforces already-held political views.

## **Power and influence of political parties**

Parties who adapt their ideological positions remain relevant.

Pragmatism is the defining feature of parties of government.

The Conservative Party has abandoned compassionate conservatism.

Third parties are ineffective and act only as a protest vote.

Third parties exert a disproportionate influence.

Single-issue parties have limited success.

The two-party system is under threat.

The SNP are the natural party of governance in Scotland.

Political parties are inherently undemocratic.

Political parties are increasingly dominated by their leaders.

Grassroots members of political parties have limited influence.

Political parties are a dying breed in the 21st century.

## **Electoral systems and theories of voting behaviour**

FPTP has no place in a modern democracy.

FPTP is a safeguard against tyranny of the majority.

PR systems are fairer and more representative of the will of the people.

Electronic voting would address the issue of low voter turnout.

Compulsory voting is necessary to legitimise election outcomes.

Age is now the key factor in determining voting outcomes.

Leadership is the most important factor in the electoral success of political parties.

Social class remains the key influence in determining voting behaviour.

The key issue in elections is the economy.

Only rational choice theory can adequately explain modern voting behaviour.

## **Topic B: Political Ideology**

### **Political ideologies, including Liberalism, Conservatism, Socialism and Nationalism**

Liberty and equality are not compatible.

Inequality is the price of a strong, economic liberal democracy.

States that prioritise individual freedom above equality prosper.

There is no such thing as society, only individuals.

The interests of the state override the rights of the individual.

Citizens' rights are inalienable.

Human nature is intrinsically selfish.

Nationalism requires an enemy for it to thrive.

### **Contemporary relevance of ideology to political parties, including Liberalism, Conservatism, Socialism and Nationalism**

In the contemporary world there is no place for ideology.

Recent economic events have seen a resurgence in the ideas of Socialism/Marxism.

Liberalism has undergone a resurgence in recent years.

Liberalism is not compatible with political parties or systems that are socially and morally conservative.

Conservatism shares more similarities than differences with Liberalism.

Conservatism has stolen the values of Nationalism and dressed them up as patriotism.

Marxism is a failed ideology.

Scottish nationalism is civic in nature.

Ethnic nationalism is the basis of modern nationalist parties.

## **Influence of ideology on contemporary political issues**

Neo-liberal ideas now dominate politics.

Individualism has triumphed over collectivism in the realm of political ideas.

Economic events have led to a resurgence of socialist ideas and political parties.

Right-wing think tanks are more influential than their left-wing counterparts.

A smaller state means more freedom and choice.

The age of political consensus is over — we have returned to a period of political polarisation.

The Scottish Government's belief in a collectivist welfare state is unaffordable and unsustainable.

Feminism's influence within political parties has increased in the 21st century.

The influence of the alt-right and their ideas is exaggerated.

Environmentalism has had little influence on mainstream politics.

Neo-liberal values now dominate the global economy.

## **Topic C: Political Structures**

### **Constitutions and political systems**

A codified constitution is preferable to an uncodified constitution.

The original intent of the Constitution of the United States is no longer fit for purpose.

Unicameral parliamentary systems are more democratic.

Bicameral systems provide greater scrutiny of government.

A federated UK is the best way to maintain the Union.

Federalism is the best system of governing socially diverse, densely populated states.

Devolution threatens the union.

Committee oversight is more powerful in the US than in the UK system of government.

### **Relationships between branches of government**

Legislative power trumps that of the executive.

The legislative and judicial branches of government find it difficult to check or block the power of the executive.

Powers of the judiciary are limited but effective

The US President is imperial.

The UK Prime Minister is presidential.

The powers of the UK Prime Minister are the envy of the President of the United States of America.

The Chairman of the Chinese Communist Party (CPC) is all-powerful.



## **Relationships between levels of government**

The powers granted to the Scottish Parliament are insufficient.

The Scottish independence referendum settled relations between Scotland and the rest of the UK.

Relationships between Federal government and State governments in USA are adversarial by nature.

Brexit will not mean an end to relations between the UK and EU.

The jurisdiction of the UK Supreme Court in Scottish affairs is questionable.

Supranational organisations represent a threat to the sovereignty of nation states.

# Area of Study 2: Law and Order

## Topic A: Understanding the Criminal Justice System

### Judicial frameworks

The UK is a police state.

Scotland's court system is efficient and effective in dealing with crime and criminality.

The court system is undermined by governments' guidelines on sentencing.

Ending the 'double-jeopardy' rule risks increasing miscarriages of justice.

The creation of the UK Supreme Court threatens the independence of the Scottish criminal justice system.

### Human rights, civil liberties and the criminal justice system

The values of the European Convention on Human Rights are compatible with the UK judicial framework

A British bill of rights would better suit the UK and/or Scottish criminal justice system.

Civil liberties are under threat from the global war on terrorism.

Recent legislation has reduced the human rights of people in the UK.

Human rights are violated regularly by the Chinese state government.

Defining Guantanamo Bay inmates as 'unlawful combatants' violates international law.

The Russian Government's treatment of political opposition is immoral and contravenes international human rights legislation.

Human rights legislation hinders the states' attempts to protect national security.

The European Convention on Human Rights has undermined the legal system in the UK.

The UK government has failed to enforce the rights of asylum seekers.

Civil rights organisations remain the only credible opposition to the government's infraction on individual's rights.

The media's coverage of crimes of a sexual nature has created mass hysteria and undermined the rule of law.

## **Current criminal justice issues**

Extending the powers of the security services is necessary to safeguard national security.

Reducing the pre-charge detention period for terror suspects in the UK to 14 days threatens the UK's national security.

Only those who attempt to disrupt the state should fear the use of new technology by the police and other government agencies.

Biometric ID cards should be compulsory for all UK citizens.

The 'not proven' verdict has no place in a modern Scottish criminal justice system.

The need for corroboration in Scottish criminal trials should be reviewed.

Recent changes to 'legal aid' exclude the most vulnerable and poorest from justice.

The Scottish criminal justice system discriminates against young males.

The special needs of women are being recognised and met within the Scottish criminal justice system.

Ethnic minorities in the USA fail to receive equality before the law.

The criminal justice system is inherently racist.

The creation of Police Scotland has been an unmitigated failure.

CCTV has been the key factor in recent reductions in crime levels across the UK.

Cuts to police budgets will invariably lead to increases in crime across the UK.

Police responses to cybercrime are 'too little, too late'.

Cybercrime is increasing in the UK.

All UK police officers should routinely carry Taser guns.

Arming the police in the UK would undermine the principle of policing by consent.

## **Topic B: Understanding Criminal Behaviour**

### **Definitions, measurements and perceptions of crime**

All crime is deviant, but not all deviance is criminal.

The crimes of the middle classes are permissible while the crimes of the poor are punishable.

Police crime statistics cannot be trusted.

Self-reporting crime statistics are the only believable crime statistics.

Statistics on reported crimes are inherently unreliable.

Race hate in Scotland is increasing.

Perceptions of crime are universal.

An irrational fear of crime is fed by the media.

### **Contemporary relevance of theories of criminal behaviour including physiological, psychological and sociological theories.**

Criminals are born that way.

Society creates criminals.

Society prepares the crime, criminals commit them.

Social deprivation and crime are inextricably linked.

Violent crime is in the genes.

Sexual violence against women is a consequence of misogynistic attitudes within society.

Masculinity and violent crime are inextricably linked.

Testosterone is the driver of violent crime.

Crime increases in a consumerist society.

Poor parenting is the cause of youth criminality.

Theoretical approaches to explaining crime are now defunct.

## **Social and economic impact of criminal behaviour on victims, perpetrators, families and wider society**

Crime affects the elderly more than any other group.

The real cost of crime is paid by young men.

Crime is concentrated in the most economically deprived areas.

White-collar crime is more damaging to society.

The middle-classes are insulated from the worst aspects of crime.

Female criminality is more damaging to families and society.

Racism is not only surviving but thriving in today's society.

The cost of cybercrime is increasingly borne by the private sector.

The UK taxpayer pays the price of private sector crime.

Fear of crime is irrational and misplaced.

## **Topic C: Responses by Society to Crime**

### **Contemporary relevance of theories of punishment, including deterrence, rehabilitation, incapacitation, retributivism and denunciation**

Prison systems are too focused on punishment to succeed.

Protecting the public should be the first and only priority of any penal system.

Crime prevention is more effective than punishment.

Capital punishment is a legitimate response to crime.

More laws mean less order.

Rehabilitation is revolutionising criminal justice.

Zero tolerance does not deter crime.

## **Preventative responses to crime, including policing strategies, multi-agency approaches and early interventions**

Mass policing is the way to combat crime.

Police relations with minority communities are broken.

Scotland has led the way in tackling knife crime.

Stop and search powers are abused by the police and require reform.

Radical profiling is controversial but necessary.

Multi-agency approaches to drug-related crime are ineffective.

Drug crime should be treated as a medical rather than a criminal issue.

Technology is the key to preventing crime.

The case for gun control in the USA is irrefutable.

## **Criminal justice responses to crime, including custodial and non-custodial sentences**

Prison works.

Prison is a costly waste of time.

Prisons are universities of crime.

Short-term prison sentences are counter-productive in reducing crime.

Prisons in Scotland get an unfair press.

Radicalisation is increasing in UK prisons.

Restorative justice fails to tackle crime.

Rehabilitation is the way to lower recidivism rates.

Purposeful activity reduces re-offending.

Only serious crime warrants a prison sentence.

Alternatives to prison jeopardise public safety.

Criminalising drug-related offences is ineffective.

Women should not be sent to prison.

Gender should not be a factor when it comes to crime and punishment.

Only men should go to prison.

Scotland must rethink its approach to tackling youth crime.

The human rights of prisoners are not being met.

Prisons fails to meet the mental health needs of prisoners.

The Scottish prison system lets down its most vulnerable inmates.

Capital punishment is ineffective.

Criminal justice is inherently biased against minorities.

# **Area of Study 3: Social inequality**

## **Topic A: Understanding Social Inequality**

### **Definitions, measurements and perceptions of inequality**

Social inequality cannot be measured by income alone.

Child poverty in the UK is exaggerated.

Eradicating child poverty is an unachievable goal.

All poverty is relative.

Social mobility is a thing of the past.

All inequality is structural in nature.

Inequality is beneficial and necessary.

### **Social stratification**

Social divisions are no longer solely economic

The individual has no power to change their standing in society.

Meritocracy is a myth.

Social divisions allow society to function properly.

Ethnicity is the most important dimension of inequality in society.

### **Contemporary relevance of theories of inequality, including individualism, functionalism, structuralism and conflict theory**

Poverty is a consequence of individual choice.

Attitudes of the poor trap them in poverty.

Wage differences between the highest and lowest earners cannot be justified.

Hierarchical societies are more prosperous.

The UK class system reinforces socio-economic inequality.



Globalisation has reduced inequality.

Trade liberalisation reinforces economic inequality.

Scarcity of resources is the cause of global inequalities.

Private education perpetuates inequality.

Marx's critique of capitalism is more relevant in the 21st century than ever.

All history is the history of class struggle.

Marx and Weber have more in common than differences.

Society cannot function without inequality.

## **Topic B: The Impact of Inequality**

### **Impact of inequality at an individual level, including education, employment, mental health and lifestyle**

Private schools entrench inequality.

Health and inequality are inextricably linked.

Poverty pushes the poor into making bad lifestyle choices.

The gig economy increases poverty and inequality.

Zero hour contracts bring no benefits to employees.

The housing market is the key driver of social division within society.

### **Impact of inequality at a local level, including social cohesion, reputation, services and businesses**

Unequal societies have the greatest social problems.

Inequality fuels racial and social division.

Managing decline is the only solution for some regions.

The poorest regions have the worst services.

Inequality damages business and employment opportunities.

## **Topic C: Responses to Social Inequality**

### **Theories of responses to inequality, including individualism and collectivism**

The social democratic model is the most effective approach to tackling poverty and inequality.

'Trickle-down' economics increase inequality.

Free markets are the most effective way to lift people out of poverty.

Equality of opportunity rather than equality is more effective in reducing inequality.

Liberal welfare systems are unsustainable.

### **Government responses to inequality**

The state cannot solve poverty and inequality.

Universal benefits create a more equal society.

Reform is needed to tackle welfare dependency.

The NHS has failed to tackle health inequalities.

Privatised healthcare increases poverty and inequality.

Non-profit healthcare systems are best at tackling health inequalities.

Comprehensive education has failed.

Free/private schools promote social mobility.

Housing policies widen the inequality gap.

Privately run workfare programmes have been a success.

Austerity extends poverty and inequality.

Privatisation of public services reinforces inequality.

Redistributive taxation is the only way to address inequality.

## **Non-governmental organisation responses to inequality**

The third sector has a key role to play in tackling inequality.

Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and charities cannot replace the role of the state in tackling inequality.

NGOs have effectively tackled global poverty.