



National
Qualifications
2026

X849/77/11

Modern Studies

TUESDAY, 19 MAY

9:00 AM – 12:00 NOON

Total marks — 90

Attempt ONE section only.

SECTION 1 — POLITICAL ISSUES AND RESEARCH METHODS — 90 marks

Part A — Attempt TWO questions.

Part B — Attempt BOTH questions.

SECTION 2 — LAW AND ORDER AND RESEARCH METHODS — 90 marks

Part A — Attempt TWO questions.

Part B — Attempt BOTH questions.

SECTION 3 — SOCIAL INEQUALITY AND RESEARCH METHODS — 90 marks

Part A — Attempt TWO questions.

Part B — Attempt BOTH questions.

Write your answers clearly in the answer booklet provided. In the answer booklet, you must clearly identify the question number you are attempting.

Use **blue** or **black** ink.

You must leave your answer booklet on your desk; if you do not, you could lose all the marks for this paper.



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SECTION 1 — POLITICAL ISSUES AND RESEARCH METHODS — 90 marks**PART A — 60 marks****Attempt TWO questions****Question 1 — Power and influence**

‘Smaller political parties have too much influence on policy making.’

Discuss, with reference to the UK/Scotland **and** any other country/countries you have studied.

30**Question 2 — Political ideology**

‘Nationalism’s influence on contemporary political issues is in decline.’

Discuss, with reference to the UK/Scotland **and** any other country/countries you have studied.

30**Question 3 — Political structures**

‘Differing levels of government are naturally in conflict with each other.’

Discuss, with reference to the UK/Scotland **and** any other country/countries you have studied.

30

PART B — 30 marks
Attempt BOTH questions

Question 4

You are researching drug misuse by elected representatives.

To what extent would unstructured interviews be more effective than surveys for investigating this issue?

In your answer you should make reference to relevant examples.

15

[Turn over

Question 5

MARKS

To what extent can **Source A** be considered trustworthy?

15

Source A

Times Investigation — **EXCLUSIVE**

Exposed: DVLA staff off work on full pay amid application backlog crisis

By Paul Morgan-Bentley, Head of Investigations

Friday March 18th 2022, The Times Newspaper

Hundreds of government civil servants at the DVLA (Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency) have done no work on full pay for significant periods of the pandemic as managers boast of watching Netflix at the public's expense, an undercover Times investigation can reveal.

Most of the government agency's 6,200 staff were sent home during the first lockdown but 3,400 of them were put on paid special leave without having to work at all, figures show. There were still almost 2,000 staff on paid special leave months later, with no expectation that they would do any work even from home. In nine of the past 24 months there have been more than 500 staff officially not working, either on paid special leave or on strike.

An undercover Times reporter worked at the DVLA last month as millions of drivers have been affected by record backlogs in licence applications and renewals. Managers told of spending working days in bed watching TV box sets. Staff said they were demoralised as colleagues on paid special leave who claimed to be too vulnerable to come to the office were 'not doing any work yet they are out and about mingling with others and going on holiday'.

Investigation — out of office

April 2020



July 2020



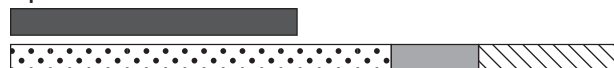
October 2020



January 2021



April 2021



July 2021



October 2021



January 2022

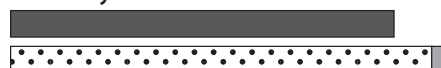


Chart: The Times and The Sunday Times — Source: DVLA

Question 5 (continued)

Source A (continued)

Amid pressure from hardline trade unionists, limits on numbers of staff at the agency's offices have remained in place throughout the pandemic, despite them being stricter than government and public health guidance. Many DVLA staff have not been able to work properly, or at all, from home throughout the pandemic as they are not allowed remote access to work systems holding licence holders' personal data. Even those civil servants on site have had periods of only having to work either a four-day week or on a week-on, week-off rota to prevent them from 'burning out'.

The backlogs at the agency have meant some people who rely on their cars for work have been unable to drive for more than a year. Lorry drivers have also been prevented from helping to deliver food and petrol during critical periods of driver shortages. The undercover reporter was among trainee call handlers who were instructed to mislead drivers about application delays, saying the wait was between six to ten weeks even when they knew it was likely to be longer.

In response to The Times findings, Grant Shapps, the transport secretary, ordered a 'thorough investigation', saying he was 'deeply concerned' and that he 'expects quick answers' from DVLA bosses.

The Times began an investigation into the DVLA because of repeated complaints from drivers about having to wait months, or in some cases more than a year, for their cases to be processed. Our undercover reporter was hired as a DVLA call handler in January and worked at its offices last month.

Shapps's spokesman said: 'Taxpayers expect prompt, efficient service from DVLA and, with the threat of COVID-19 diminishing, there is no excuse for excessive delay'. The Department for Transport said: 'We take these allegations extremely seriously'.

The PCS union said there had been more than 2,200 reported cases of COVID-19 among staff at the DVLA in Swansea and this was the highest number in any one workplace in the UK. A spokesman said: 'In the first lockdown the vast majority of staff at DVLA were sent home. However, as the technology used at the DVLA was substandard, that meant most staff could do little or no work'.

Mark Serwotka, general secretary of the PCS, said: 'The dispute was entirely justified given the huge Covid outbreak in the offices'.

Adapted from <https://www.thetimes.com/article/dvla-staff-off-work-on-full-pay-amid-application-backlog-crisis-bf02t8hcl>

The Times newspaper uses a paywall and requires a paid subscription before any online content can be accessed.

[Turn over

SECTION 2 — LAW AND ORDER AND RESEARCH METHODS — 90 marks

PART A — 60 marks

Attempt TWO questions

Question 6 — Understanding the criminal justice system

‘Civil liberties are at risk in the criminal justice system.’

Discuss, with reference to the UK/Scotland **and** any other country/countries you have studied.

30

Question 7 — Understanding criminal behaviour

‘Psychological theories of crime have little contemporary relevance.’

Discuss, with reference to the UK/Scotland **and** any other country/countries you have studied.

30

Question 8 — Responses by society to crime

‘Deterrence is the most important function of punishment.’

Discuss, with reference to the UK/Scotland **and** any other country/countries you have studied.

30

PART B — 30 marks
Attempt BOTH questions

Question 9

You are researching drug misuse by prison officers.

To what extent would unstructured interviews be more effective than surveys for investigating this issue?

In your answer you should make reference to relevant examples.

15

[Turn over

Question 10

To what extent can **Source B** be considered trustworthy?

15

Source BTimes Investigation — **EXCLUSIVE****Exposed: HMP Bedford security lapses spark prison investigation**

By Paul Morgan-Bentley, Head of Investigations

Wednesday March 27th 2024, The Times Newspaper

An urgent investigation has begun into prison security after an undercover journalist was hired at one of the country's most dangerous jails and was then able to walk inside and interact with prisoners without security searches. Last month a Times reporter was hired by an agency to work at HMP Bedford amid a nationwide staffing shortage. On two out of eight days that he worked at the prison, there was no one manning the security scanners at the front entrance when he arrived for work. This allowed him and several others to walk inside the jail and through to prisoner wings without even the most basic searches.

Even when there were staff on security, they often said they had not been trained to use scanners as they are meant to under government rules. Staff said there were 'very rarely' proper searches in the early morning, when many arrived for their shifts. The reporter was repeatedly able to enter the prison without having his belongings scanned for contraband such as drugs and weapons.

HMP Bedford is one of five prisons that have been put on urgent notification to improve by the prison inspectorate in just over a year, after it was found to have the highest levels of violent assaults against staff in adult male prisons in England and Wales.

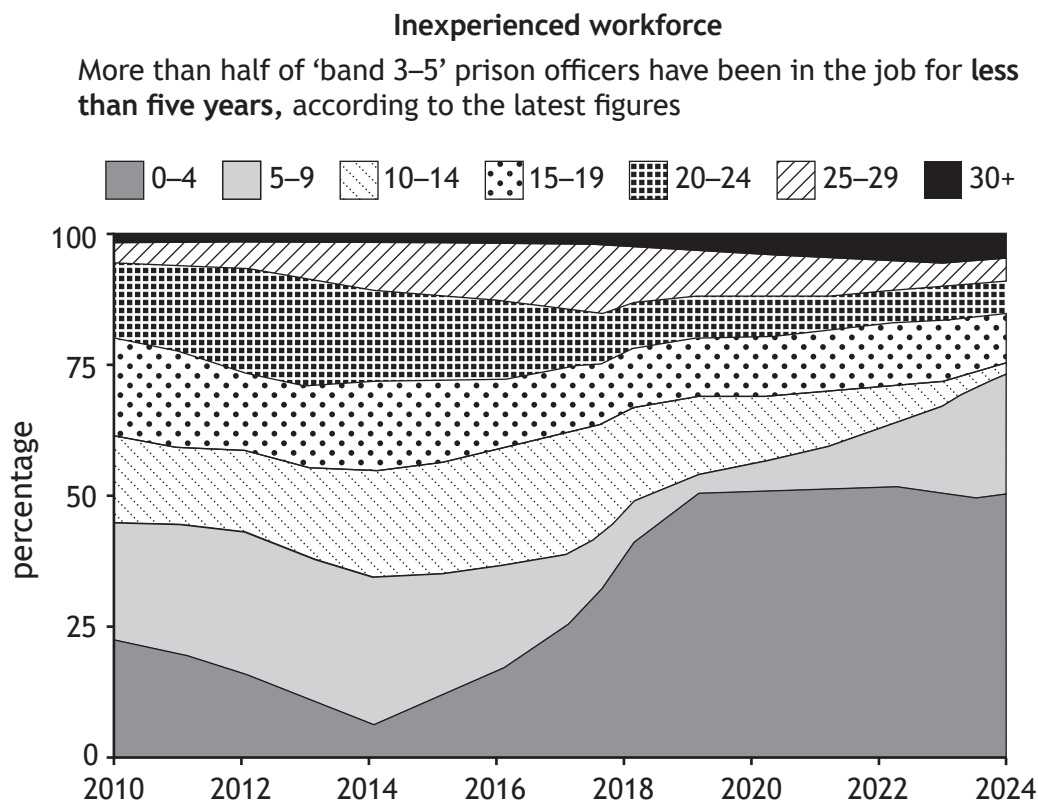
Rishi Sunak has been warned by officials that further action is needed urgently as prisons are at risk of running out of space within weeks, which could spark riots.

'Less than three weeks after applying via the agency, I was inside the prison for my first day. My role as a temporary OSG escort involved me escorting building contractors as they worked on refurbishments to the old Victorian jail, including in a central area on the prisoner wings. Even though HMP Bedford is particularly dangerous, with the highest rates of violent assaults on prison staff in the country, I began the job without being vetted as OSGs usually are when they are hired directly by the MoJ. I was told I could start because I had passed a criminal record check. However, there had been no proper checks on me and my employment background, which would easily have shown that I am a journalist at The Times.'

While he was undercover, a damning report into the jail was published. Inspectors found that it was filthy, infested with rats and cockroaches, and stated that levels of violence were very high.

Question 10 (continued)

Source B (continued)



Quarterly data for England and Wales up to December 2023

Chart: The Times and The Sunday Times — Source: HM Prison and Probation Service

In response to the undercover investigation, Alex Chalk, justice secretary and lord chancellor, has ordered an investigation into prison contractor vetting, seeking 'urgent clarification' on whether the processes used are appropriate. The MoJ said that all jail staff and visitors were 'regularly and randomly searched' and there was no evidence that contractor tools had got into the hands of prisoners. It said that last month security scanners at HMP Bedford were in use 91 percent of the time during 'core' hours.

Hays, the recruitment agency that hired the reporter, said it had complied with the vetting process set out by the MoJ, which requires OSG escorts to have full enhanced vetting within their first 12 weeks in the role. A spokeswoman said: 'We consistently try to identify ways of improving our processes, and despite procedure being followed in this case, we will be conducting a review of our recruitment process for the supply of these types of roles.'

Adapted from <https://www.thetimes.com/uk/article/hmp-bedford-investigation-prison-security-checks-rkhdscsf8>

AND

<https://www.thetimes.com/uk/article/undercover-hmp-bedford-prison-investigation-c3mnzsjnq>

The Times newspaper uses a paywall and requires a paid subscription before any online content can be accessed.

SECTION 3 — SOCIAL INEQUALITY AND RESEARCH METHODS — 90 marks**PART A — 60 marks****Attempt TWO questions****Question 11 — Understanding social inequality**

‘Functionalism best explains social inequality today.’

Discuss, with reference to the UK/Scotland **and** any other country/countries you have studied.

30**Question 12 — The impact of social inequality**

‘The impact of inequality in society is most easily seen at the local level.’

Discuss, with reference to the UK/Scotland **and** any other country/countries you have studied.

30**Question 13 — Responses to social inequality**

‘The Government has failed at reducing inequality in society.’

Discuss, with reference to the UK/Scotland **and** any other country/countries you have studied.

30

PART B — 30 marks
Attempt BOTH questions

Question 14

You are researching drug misuse in areas of deprivation.

To what extent would unstructured interviews be more effective than surveys for investigating this issue?

In your answer you should make reference to relevant examples.

15

[Turn over

Question 15

To what extent can **Source C** be considered trustworthy?

15

Source C

Times Investigation — **EXCLUSIVE**

Exposed: How British Gas debt agents break into homes of vulnerable

By Paul Morgan-Bentley, Head of Investigations

Wednesday February 1st 2023, The Times Newspaper

British Gas routinely sends debt collectors to break into customers' homes and force-fit pay-as-you-go meters, even when they are known to have extreme vulnerabilities, a Times investigation can reveal. An undercover reporter worked for Arvato, a company used by British Gas to pursue debts, amid rocketing energy prices and more customers falling behind with their bills.

The reporter accompanied debt agents in below-freezing conditions as they worked with a locksmith to break into the home of a single father of three young children and switch it to a prepayment meter. If families with these gas meters cannot afford to top up, their heating is cut off.

According to job notes seen by The Times, other British Gas customers who have had prepayment meters fitted by force in recent weeks include a woman in her fifties described as 'severe mental health bipolar' and a mother whose 'daughter is disabled'.

Customer complaints

British Gas recorded the most complaints per 100,000 customer accounts of the large energy suppliers in Quarter 3 (July, August, September) 2022

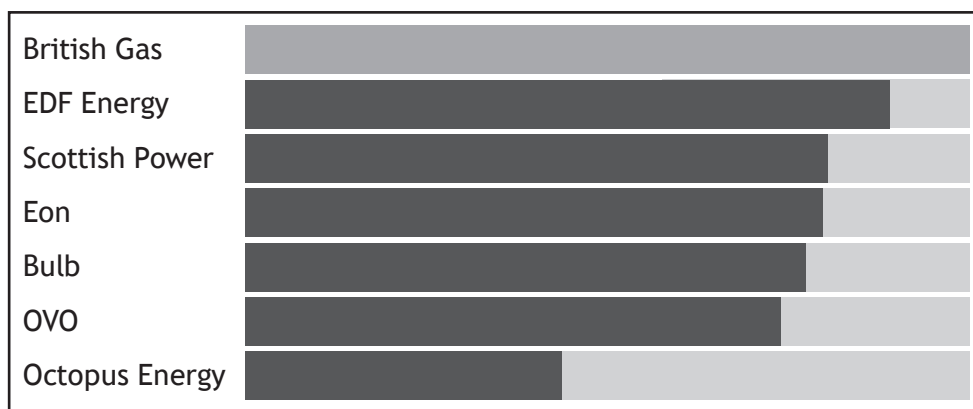


Chart: The Times and The Sunday Times — Source: Ofgem

After being approached for comment, British Gas suspended the practice of force-fitting prepayment meters. It began an investigation into the 'deeply concerning' findings, adding: 'This is not who we are — it's not how we do business.'

Question 15 (continued)

Source C (continued)

Grant Shapps, the business and energy secretary, has ordered an urgent meeting in the coming days with British Gas and said ministers would be ‘demanding answers to ensure this systemic failure is addressed’. He said: ‘I am horrified by the findings of this investigation and would like to thank The Times for shining a light on these abhorrent practices.’

It is a bitterly cold January morning and I am in a team of five men sent by British Gas to break into a house where three children live with their father. Alfonso, the debt collector leading the team, bangs on the door. He is wearing a parka lined with faux fur, zipped up to his neck, and leans down to shout through the letterbox.

‘Hello, it’s British Gas, your gas supplier. We’re here with a court warrant. Can you please open the door? Otherwise we have a locksmith who will open it for you.’ When there is no answer, the locksmith gets to work. ‘This is the exciting bit. I love this bit,’ Alfonso says. The gas engineer gets to work, switching the family to a pay-as-you-go smart meter, which will cut off their heating if it is not topped up. He explains that a technical issue means the family may well not be sent a top-up card for their new meter. ‘He won’t be sent a card so he’s going to go off supply,’ he says. ‘It’ll be £10 emergency and then that’s it, he’ll go off supply.’ When we entered the home, the radiators were warm. When we leave, they are cold.

For the past month I have worked undercover as a debt collector, breaking into homes like this one for British Gas, to reclaim customer debts. While this sort of aggressive debt collection is always controversial, it has become a particular focus of campaigning by charities and campaigners during the cost-of-living crisis. Energy companies can force-fit prepayment meters by applying to courts for warrants to enter their customers’ homes. They are meant to screen for vulnerabilities, but courts are said to sign off hundreds of the cases in minutes, with no time for proper scrutiny.

British Gas and other energy firms use Arvato, a third-party company, to pursue debts on their behalf. Before starting as a debt collector, I had four days of video training. Describing the warrant process, the Arvato trainer said: ‘Honestly, it’s a little bit cheeky. Basically the government says you can’t disconnect residential customers so what we do is we install a prepayment meter and then if they don’t top up they self-disconnect. So we don’t actually disconnect them. It’s a bit of a laughable loophole.’

A spokesman for Ofgem said: ‘These are extremely serious allegations from The Times. We are launching an urgent investigation into British Gas. The energy crisis is no excuse for unacceptable behaviour towards any customer, particularly those in vulnerable circumstances.’

Adapted from <https://www.thetimes.com/article/british-gas-prepayment-meter-debt-energy-bills-investigation-wrgnzt6xs>

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