



National
Qualifications
2026

2026 Modern Studies

Paper 2

Higher

Question Paper Finalised Marking Instructions

These marking instructions have been prepared by examination teams for use by Qualifications Scotland appointed markers when marking external course assessments.

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General marking principles for Higher Modern Studies Paper 2

Always apply these general principles. Use them in conjunction with the detailed marking instructions, which identify the key features required in candidates' responses.

- (a) Always use positive marking. This means candidates accumulate marks for the demonstration of relevant skills, knowledge and understanding; marks are not deducted for errors or omissions.
- (b) If a candidate response does not seem to be covered by either the principles or detailed marking instructions, and you are uncertain how to assess it, you must seek guidance from your team leader.
- (c) Marking must be consistent. Never make a hasty judgement on a response based on length, quality of handwriting or a confused start.
- (d) Use the full range of marks available for each question.
- (e) The detailed marking instructions are not an exhaustive list. Award marks for other relevant points.

Marking principles for each question type

For each of the question types the following provides an overview of marking principles.

The information handling questions used in this paper are

- to what extent is it accurate to state that . . . **10 marks**
- what conclusions can be drawn . . . **10 marks**
- to what extent are sources . . . reliable **8 marks**

Objectivity questions (10 marks)

- Award up to **3 marks** for a single developed point depending on the use of the evidence in the sources and the quality of the analysis or evaluation.
- Award marks where candidates synthesise information both within and between sources.
- For **full marks** candidates must refer to all sources in their answer.
- Candidates must also make an overall judgement as to the extent of the accuracy of the given statement. Award a **maximum of 8 marks** if no overall judgement is made on extent of accuracy of the statement.

Conclusions questions (10 marks)

- Award up to **3 marks** for a single developed point depending on the use of the evidence in the sources and the quality of the analysis or evaluation.
- Award marks where candidates synthesise information both within and between sources.
- For **full marks** candidates must refer to all sources in their answer.
- Candidates are required to make an overall conclusion about the issue in the question. Award a **maximum of 8 marks** if candidates do not provide an overall conclusion.

Reliability questions (8 marks)

- Award up to **2 marks** for a single developed point depending on the use of the evidence in the sources and the quality of the analysis and/or evaluation.
- For **full marks** candidates must refer to all sources in their answer.
- Candidates must also make a judgement based on the evidence on the most reliable source. Award a **maximum of 6 marks** if candidates do not provide an overall judgement.
- Award a **maximum of 3 marks** if only one factor is considered, for example, date, bias, sample size, provenance.

Higher Modern Studies marking grid for 10-mark source based (objectivity/conclusions) questions

	1 mark	2 marks	3 marks	4 marks	5 marks	6 marks	7 marks	8 marks
Use of sources of evidence. Award up to 8 marks .	Candidate uses one relevant piece of evidence from one source relating to one aspect of the issue.	Candidate links two distinct pieces of evidence relating to one aspect of the issue which may be from within a single source or between sources.	Candidate synthesises two distinct pieces of evidence relating to one aspect of the issue which may be from within a single source or between sources and gives an evaluative comment.	In addition, the candidate addresses a second aspect of the issue with reference to one relevant piece of evidence.	In addition, the candidate addresses a second aspect of the issue with reference to linked evidence.	In addition, the candidate addresses a second aspect of the issue is addressed with reference to synthesised evidence including an evaluative comment.	In addition, the candidate addresses a third aspect of the issue with reference to one relevant piece of evidence.	In addition, the candidate addresses a third aspect of the issue with reference to linked evidence. OR Synthesised evidence including an evaluative comment.
Objectivity Candidate presents an analysis of the accuracy/selectivity/objectivity of a given view against the evidence. Award up to 2 marks .	Candidate provides an objective assessment of a given view, based on evidence presented from the sources.	Candidate provides a detailed objective assessment of a given view, based on evidence presented from the sources.	1 For full marks candidates must refer to all sources in their answer. Award a maximum of 6 marks if all sources are not used. 2 Objectivity questions. - Award up to 8 marks for an accurate evaluation of the given view using evidence. - Award up to 2 marks for an overall judgement as to the extent of accuracy and/or objectivity of the view. 3 Conclusions questions. For full marks candidates must make evaluative comments or judgement(s) or draw a conclusion about each of the points given in the question. Award a further 2 marks for an overall conclusion.					

Higher Modern Studies marking grid for 10-mark source based (objectivity/conclusions) questions

	1 mark	2 marks	3 marks	4 marks	5 marks	6 marks	7 marks	8 marks
Conclusion Candidate presents an overall evaluative comment(s) derived from a judgement of the evidence. Award up to 2 marks .	Candidate presents an overall conclusion that is clear and supported by evidence from the sources.	Candidate presents an overall conclusion that is insightful and supported by detailed evidence from the sources.						

Higher Modern Studies marking grid for 8-mark source based (reliability) questions

	1 mark	2 marks	3 marks	4 marks	5 marks	6 marks
Use of sources of evidence. Award up to 6 marks .	Candidate uses one relevant piece of evidence accurately to explain the reliability of one source.	Candidate uses one relevant piece of evidence accurately to explain in detail the reliability of one source. OR Candidate uses two distinct pieces of evidence accurately to explain the reliability of one source.	In addition, the candidate uses one relevant piece of evidence accurately to explain the reliability of a second source.	In addition, the candidate uses one relevant piece of evidence accurately to explain in detail the reliability of a second source. OR Candidate uses two distinct pieces of evidence accurately to explain the reliability of a second source.	In addition, the candidate uses one relevant piece of evidence accurately to explain the reliability of a third source.	In addition, the candidate uses one relevant piece of evidence accurately to explain in detail the reliability of a third source. OR Candidate uses two distinct pieces of evidence accurately to explain the reliability of a third source.
Reliability Candidate presents an overall evaluative comment(s) on which source is the most reliable, derived from a judgement of the evidence. Award up to 2 marks .	Candidate presents an overall conclusion on the most reliable source, that is clear and supported by evidence from the sources.	Candidate presents an overall conclusion on the most reliable source, that is insightful and supported by detailed evidence from all the sources.	- For full marks candidates must refer to all sources in their answer. Award a maximum of 5 marks if all sources are not used. Award a maximum of 3 marks if only one factor is considered, for example, date, bias, sample size, provenance. - Award up to 6 marks for an accurate evaluation of source reliability. Award a further 2 marks for an overall judgement on the most reliable source.			

Marking instructions for each question

Conclusions question

Question			General marking instructions	Max mark	Detailed marking instructions for this question
1.			Candidates interpret and/or evaluate complex sources in order to reach conclusions. In order to gain marks candidates must show evidence which explains the conclusions reached. - award up to 3 marks where candidates use evidence appropriately, depending on the quality of the explanation and the synthesis of the evidence to reach any one conclusion - for full marks candidates must refer to all sources in their answer - for full marks candidates must reach conclusions about each of the points given and make an overall conclusion on the issue	10	Candidates can gain marks in a number of ways up to a maximum of 10 marks. Possible approaches to answering the question The influence of age on voting behaviour compared to previous elections Response 1 The influence of age on voting behaviour in 2024 has not changed. Source A tells us that in 2024, as in all recent general elections, younger voters were more likely to vote Labour due to their policies, unlike older voters who gave their support to the Conservatives. Total – 1 mark (conclusion with evidence from one source) Response 2 Age has always been influential on voting behaviour, and this has not changed. Source A states ‘In the 2024 election, as in all recent general elections, younger voters were more likely to vote Labour due to their policies, unlike older voters who gave their support to the Conservatives.’ Source C shows that this pattern did not change in the 2024 election as over 40% in each group up to 45-year-olds voted Labour, compared to under 20% in each of these age groups who voted Conservative. Total – 3 marks (conclusion with three pieces of synthesized evidence) The influence of social class on voting behaviour compared to previous elections Response 3 My conclusion is that the influence of social class on voting behaviour in 2024 changed. Source A says that ‘In the 2024 election, Labour won most votes in all social class categories for the first time.’ Total – 1 mark (conclusion with evidence from one source) Response 4 Source A states ‘In most general elections this century, voters in classes A and B tended to support the Conservatives, while those in D and E were more likely to vote Labour.’ However, in 2024, the influence of social class changed. Not only did Labour win among their traditional voters in D and E, they also won most in

Question			General marking instructions	Max mark	Detailed marking instructions for this question
					categories A and B, who usually vote Conservative. Labour won this category by highly significant margin of 10%. Total – 3 marks (conclusion with synthesised evidence and an evaluative comment) The link between campaign spending and voter turnout Response 5 Increasing campaign spending does not necessarily mean an increase in voter turnout. Source A shows spending went up from £72.6 million to £94.5 million, but Source B shows that Scottish turnout fell to below 60%. Total – 2 marks (conclusion with evidence from two sources) Response 6 It can be concluded that spending more on campaigning does not lead to an increase in voter turnout. According to Source A, in the 2019 and 2024 elections, there was a massive increase in campaign spending by more than £20 million. However, Source B shows that this increase in campaign spending did not lead to an increase in voter turnout and in fact, voter turnout decreased in all four UK nations. Total – 3 marks (conclusion with two pieces of source evidence and an evaluative comment) Possible overall conclusions on the factor which most influenced voting behaviour in the 2024 UK General Election. Response 7 Class had the most influence on voting behavior as all four categories voted similarly. Total – 0 marks (conclusion with invalid evidence) Response 8 Age had the most influence on voting behavior. Younger voters were more attracted to Labour. Total – 1 mark (conclusion with supporting evidence from Source C) Response 9 Age has the most influence on voting behavior. You are nearly nine times more likely to vote Conservative if you are over 65 than if you are under 25 years old.

Question			General marking instructions	Max mark	Detailed marking instructions for this question
					Total – 2 marks (conclusion with supporting evidence from Source C) Response 10 Class had the biggest impact on the 2024 General Election. For the first time, the Labour Party won the largest vote among A and B voters. They switched from the Conservatives and preferred Labour by a large margin of 10%. This had a big impact on the outcome. Total – 2 marks (conclusion with supporting evidence from Sources A and C) <i>Any other valid point that meets the criteria described in the general marking principles for this type of question.</i> Do not award marks for a valid conclusion which is not supported with relevant source evidence.

Objectivity question

Question			General marking instructions	Max mark	Detailed marking instructions for this question
2.			Candidates interpret and/or evaluate complex sources of information, detecting and explaining the extent of objectivity. In order to gain marks candidates must show evidence which supports the extent of accuracy in a given viewpoint. - award up to 3 marks where candidates use evidence appropriately, depending on the quality of the explanation and the synthesis of the evidence, for any one explanation of the extent of objectivity - for full marks candidates must refer to all sources in their answer - award a maximum of 6 marks if a candidate only refers to one side of the argument in their answer - award a maximum of 8 marks if no overall judgement is made on the extent of the accuracy of the statement	10	Candidates can gain marks in a number of ways up to a maximum of 10 marks. Evidence that supports the view – ‘weak gun laws are the biggest cause of gun-related deaths in the USA.’ Examples of types of evidence that support the view include: - Mississippi, Alabama and Texas have the weakest gun laws according to Everytown and the highest number of gun-related deaths at 28.1, 24.0 and 14.3 respectively (Sources A and B) - Texas has weak gun laws and had the highest number of mass shootings in 2023 with 64 (Sources B and C) - the states with the lowest Everytown gun law scores have the highest gun ownership as their weak laws make it easier to access weapons resulting in a higher number of gun-related deaths (Sources A and B) - police killings - these are higher in Texas than they are in California, Texas has weaker gun laws than California Possible approach to answering the question Response 1 The statement is accurate as Mississippi has the highest rate of gun-related deaths in the USA according to Source B. Total – 0 marks Response 2 Texas has 144 police killings and weak gun laws. Total – 0 marks Response 3 The statement is accurate as Source A tell us that Mississippi was rated as a ‘national failure’ by Everytown due to having the weakest laws and highest rate of gun-related deaths. Total – 1 mark (evidence used from one source)

Question	General marking instructions	Max mark	Detailed marking instructions for this question
			Response 4 Source A tells us that in 2024 Everytown rated Mississippi a ‘national failure’ for its weak gun laws. This links to Source B which shows Mississippi has the highest number of gun-related deaths showing the statement to be accurate. Total – 2 marks (linked evidence from two sources) Response 5 Source C says that in 2024, Texas’ police officers shot and killed more people than California’s police officers (144 compared to 114). This could be because Texas has much weaker gun laws than California according to Source B - an Everytown score of 14.0 compared to 91.0. Total – 2 marks (linked evidence from two sources) Response 6 Source A tells us that in 2024 Everytown rated Mississippi a ‘national failure’ for its weak gun laws. This links to Source B which shows Mississippi has the highest number of gun-related deaths. In addition, Sources A and B shows that California has the strictest gun laws and has the lowest number of gun-related deaths – every other state has weaker gun laws and more gun-related deaths. Total – 3 marks (linked evidence from two sources with an evaluative comment) Evidence that opposes the view – ‘weak gun laws are the biggest cause of gun-related deaths in the USA.’ Examples of types of evidence that opposes the view include: - the NRA point to mental illness as the major cause of gun-related deaths and claim most homicides and suicides are mental health related (Source A) - poverty is a bigger cause of gun-related death than weak gun laws. It is argued that high rates of poverty and gun violence go hand in hand (Source C) - the two states with the highest poverty rates, Mississippi and Alabama, have the highest gun ownership and gun deaths (Source B) Possible approach to answering the question Response 7 Weak laws may not be the biggest cause of gun-related deaths. President Trump thinks untreated mental illness is the cause. Total – 1 mark (evidence used from one source)

Question			General marking instructions	Max mark	Detailed marking instructions for this question
					Response 8 The statement is opposed as California has strict firearms regulations (Source A), but it had the second most mass shootings in 2023. (Source C) Total – 2 marks (linked evidence from two sources) Response 9 Untreated mental illness is the cause of gun-related deaths according to President Trump in Source C. He is supported in Source A by the NRA who point to mental health illness as the major cause of gun-related deaths. Source A also says that the majority (60%) of gun-related deaths are suicides, so this is clearly related to mental illness. Total – 3 marks (linked evidence from two sources with an evaluative comment) For full marks, candidates must make an overall judgment as to the extent of the accuracy of the given statement. Examples of possible overall judgements: - the statement is accurate as California has the lowest deaths and the strictest laws (0 marks) - the statement is accurate to a certain extent as Mississippi has the weakest laws and highest gun-related deaths (1 mark) - the statement is mostly accurate because California has the least amount of gun-related deaths when compared to other states like Mississippi, while having laws which are over twenty times as strict (2 marks) - the statement is very inaccurate as the President Trump believes the real cause of gun violence is untreated mental illness. This is backed up by the fact that 60% of gun-related deaths are suicides (2 marks)

Reliability question

Question			General marking instructions	Max mark	Detailed marking instructions for this question
3.			Candidates interpret and/or three complex sources of information, evaluating and explaining the extent or reliability. In order to gain marks candidates must show evidence which supports the evaluations reached. - award up to 2 marks where candidates use evidence appropriately, depending on the quality of the explanation and the synthesis of the evidence, for any one explanation of the extent of reliability - for full marks candidates must refer to all sources in their answer - for full marks candidates must make an overall conclusion on the most reliable source of information - award a maximum of 3 marks if only one factor is considered, for example, date, sample size, bias, provenance	8	Candidates can gain marks in a number of ways up to a maximum of 8 marks. Source A Response 1 Source A is reliable as the survey has a large sample size of over 4,500 participants which is representative. Total – 1 mark (straightforward evidence provided) Response 2 Source A is reliable due to it being produced by YouGov who are a well-known and reputable polling and research company, which enhances reliability. YouGov will use qualified statisticians to organise, deliver and analyse the results which increases the trustworthiness and reliability of the source. Total – 2 marks (detailed evidence and explanation provided) Source B Response 3 Source B can be said to be unreliable as it is a newspaper and newspapers are biased. Total – 0 marks (no explanation provided) Response 4 Source B can be said to be unreliable as it comes from a newspaper that doesn't need to present a balanced viewpoint and therefore can be biased in how it presents its information. On the other hand, the authors name is given, and their views can be checked online. Total – 2 marks (detailed evidence and explanation provided) Source C Response 5 Source C is an online post from Age UK which is a charity that campaigns on behalf of older people. Total – 0 marks (no explanation provided)

Question			General marking instructions	Max mark	Detailed marking instructions for this question
					Response 6 Source C is an online post from Age UK which is a charity that campaigns on behalf of older people. This means that they could be biased as they may present one-sided information. Total – 1 mark (straightforward evidence provided) Response 7 Source C can be said to be partly unreliable as it has been created by a charity group, and this increases the chances of it being biased or one-sided as they are likely to present information that only backs up their argument or the cause that they are fighting for. On the other hand, Age UK have had loads of experience campaigning in this area and can be consider experts in this field. Total – 2 marks (detailed evidence and explanation provided) Examples of an overall conclusion on the most reliable source of information Response 8 Source A is the most reliable because it was produced by YouGov. Total – 0 marks (source given but no evidence used to justify decision) Response 9 Source A is more reliable than Source C because it is from a reputable polling company who have used a large sample size which increases reliability, whereas Source C is from a charity which campaigns on behalf of older people and is therefore likely to present one-sided evidence. Total – 1 mark (overall conclusion supported by evidence from two sources) Response 10 Source A is more reliable than Source C because it is from a reputable polling company who have used a large sample size which increases reliability, whereas Source C is from a charity and is therefore likely to present one-sided evidence. Source B is from a newspaper that doesn't need to be unbiased and can have its own agenda. Source A is clearly the most reliable with Source B and Source C being quite similar in terms of reliability. Both Source B and Source C could be said to be biased as they present one-sided information. Total – 2 marks (overall conclusion supported by evidence from all sources)

Question			General marking instructions	Max mark	Detailed marking instructions for this question
					For full marks , candidates must make an overall judgement on the most reliable source comparing all three sources.

[END OF MARKING INSTRUCTIONS]