

## Higher Modern Studies – Essay Plans / Outlines

The purpose of these plans is not to give you something you learn off by heart and repeat like a parrot during the exam. You have already completed most of your revision and as a Higher student, you are expected to come up with your own essay.

However, these plans can be treated like a warm up. Don't try to memorise them – just relax and read them over a few times. This will help you get into the mindset for answering questions and the pieces of your essay will fit together more smoothly on the day ... using the content you have already revised.

There are a variety of ways of answering any question – this is stressed to markers in their instructions – so do *not* assume the outlines below are the only or the even best approach. They are merely a pointer to one possibility. Trust your own judgement.

Remember - you are a Higher pupil and should have the confidence to display higher skills.

Of course, timing is crucial. Keep an eye on the clock – you only have 22.5 minutes per essay. Do not run out of time for the last essay.

# Health & Wealth

## Essay 1 – 2007

### **To what extent are the founding principles of the Welfare state being met?**

For this essay you could show briefly in the intro that you know what the founding principles of the Welfare State are – to improve the UK's poverty, health, unemployment, education and housing. You don't have time to cover all in depth but you could tackle two or three briefly and the remaining two more fully. Can state this at the start.

For housing you could mention the improvements in the housing stock - most now have modern kitchens, bathrooms and central heating. On the other hand, the emphasis govts have placed on owner occupiers over the past 50 years means there is now a shortage of public housing (council houses or housing association) for rent. Moreover, the high price of houses and problems getting a mortgage mean a nationwide shortage of affordable housing, particularly for young people

For education, welfare state has extended schooling to 16 and spent billions on improving facilities. However inequality in that 8% of UK pupils go to independent schools - some claim they are buying education with top class facilities. More than ever going to university so social mobility has increased, but recession has led to high tuition fees in E&W – may mean rich are more able to go than poor so may increase inequality.

You could then look at poverty and perhaps unemployment together in a bit more depth. Point to govt attempts to redistribute wealth through tax and benefits - and reduce poverty by getting people off benefits and into work. There are various schemes and govt policies you could give as examples but avoid too much depth if your time is short. Possibly make the link between income and poverty by describing social exclusion and the cycle of poverty.

The last point could then link into health where you describe the progress in life expectancy and the ability to treat more illnesses than ever. However, remains great inequalities in health between groups even when living fairly close. Could also mention great and growing cost of the NHS.

If there is time, would be good to finish by referring to cuts in welfare state spending and give some brief details on coalition plans for changes to a universal benefit and maybe changes to NHS in E&W. With it's own Parliament, Scotland won't be the same but it faces similar economic problems, so new SNP govt. will need to make tough decisions in months and years ahead.

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**“Be flexible and accept a variety of approaches.”**

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## Essay 2 – 2007

### **To what extent do social and economic inequalities continue to exist in the UK?**

For this essay your short intro could state the welfare state has seen great improvements in housing, health, education and poverty for the vast majority. Despite this, a range of deep inequalities continue to exist - these inequalities reflect age, gender, ethnic group, region and social class.

You could then look at two of these in more depth providing statistics to show the extent of the inequalities. You could cover govt policies to tackle these inequalities and how successful the policies have been.

Perhaps begin with gender inequalities – look at the differences, in pay etc., between men and women and briefly discuss why women earn less and are more likely to live in poverty – family commitments so more likely to be part-time workers, problems in building a career discrimination, glass ceiling, etc.. Then discuss the steps taken by govts (e.g. laws) and evidence of progress.

You could then repeat this approach for inequalities facing ethnic minorities, describing why problems arise, what steps govt has taken, successes achieved and why problems still continue.

If you prefer, you could look at inequalities based on age or region (the North-South divide) so long as you have some examples to back up your points and provide analysis.

You do not have time to cover the whole range of inequalities in depth.

A good finish would be to point to the impact of the current economic problems in limiting the amount of money available to govts in taxes to fund programmes tackling inequalities. Meanwhile unemployment is likely to increase the problems faced by those groups already suffering from inequalities. (e.g. poorly qualified youths from ethnic minorities, or those with disabilities will find it very difficult to find work in a depressed job market with many people chasing every job). Some up-to-date figures on unemployment rates would be good.

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## Essay 3 – 2008

### **Assess the effectiveness of government policies to reduce gender and ethnic inequalities.**

Your short intro could get straight to the point by saying that despite continual growth in the UK's wealth since WWII, deep inequalities still exist. These include gender and ethnic inequalities.

You could then look at reasons why women have lower pay and are more likely to live in poverty > more likely lone-parents – family commitments – more in part-time jobs in low paid sectors – poverty trap – career breaks – discrimination at work – glass ceiling. Then you could look at help from govt – legislation - Equal Pay Act and Sex Discrimination Act both of which continue to help – also steps to reduce low pay which affects more women (e.g. national minimum wage) – as well as benefits to help lone parents and programmes get people into work. Stats to show improvement would help. However recession and cuts likely to hit women hard – more women work in public sector so directly affected by govt cuts and now more competition for temporary low-paid jobs.

You could then take a similar approach to racial inequalities – look at figures showing level of inequalities and reasons – discrimination, education and culture – govt moves to help – some success – less discrimination, education programmes, reduction in poverty, etc. On the other hand, current economic difficulties will again cause problems – cuts in govt programmes & less jobs available – diffc for youths with few qualifications and some ethnic groups have high numbers of such youths. However not all groups suffer to same extent – some out-perform white community.

If time you could finish with comment about other inequalities such as age and regional also exist but gender and ethnic inequalities remain among the most difficult to solve.

## Essay 4 – 2008

### **Critically examine the view that government, not individuals, should be responsible for health care and welfare provision.**

*This essay is about collectivist and individualist approaches to health care and welfare provision. Your answer could describe these, look at how they affect the policies govts adopt, and then consider how successful they have been.*

Intro could state welfare state a safety net for those in need of welfare and health care - cradle to the grave. Funded through general taxation and like an insurance system, pays for help at when people need it. However, parties disagree on how the help should be organised and how much responsibility individuals should have.

The individualist view (traditionally Conservatives) stresses that differences in health and wealth explained by individual lifestyle choices - health, some drink, smoke, use drugs, eat a poor diet and do little exercise. Poverty - some fail to get qualifications, some opt for state benefits rather than work for low pay. (Figures could be given to show link between poverty and poor health.)

Individualists - criticise 'nanny state' - aim to reduce state role so that individuals take more responsibility – tighter controls on benefits and strict tests on those who qualify (e.g. for disability benefits). For health, emphasis on educating people through health campaigns to make better choices. Individualists more open to private health care and introducing private companies into the NHS (e.g. catering, cleaning)

Collectivists say reality is more complex – stress many want to work but caught in poverty trap – cycle of deprivation difficult to break out of - link between poverty and ill health – poor lifestyle choices often result of situation disadvantaged are in - so merely calling for better choices not enough – govt action needed to tackle complex and inter-related causes of poverty and poor health

Blair Labour govt accepted link between poverty and ill-health – collectivist approach based on govt reports (Acheson) – policies aimed to reduce social inclusion - use benefits to help people back to work – aim to cut poverty, raise self-esteem, improve health. Policies included New Deal, Job Centre Plus, Sure Start, Tax credits. Health policies included target setting, smoking ban, govt programmes to tackle obesity, etc..

Labour policies brought some successes (statistics). However very expensive – massive growth in public spending on benefits and NHS. Some say major cause of recession.

Could conclude by saying severe govt cuts now under way by coalition govt - likely to see a swing back to less expensive individualist policies .. could cause difficulties for many Lib Dems who tend to be more collectivist and some believe could threaten the coalition.

## Essay 5 - 2009

### Assess the impact of income on health?

Again there are various ways you can tackle this. A good approach may be to look at the impact of income on health but also the other factors which affect health.

Your intro could point out that people with low pay and the unemployed have poorer health than those in professional jobs with high incomes. Income is clearly important but other factors such as gender, ethnicity and geography also affect health outcomes.

You could then give evidence of link between low income and poor health - income determines the housing and environment where people live. Deprived areas have higher rates of minor as well as serious illnesses. This is partly related to lifestyle choices - lower social classes have higher rates of smoking, drinking, drugs, poor diet and obesity (provide figures) – while higher income groups often better educated about health issues - can afford better housing, healthier diets, exercise activities such as gyms - may opt for private health care. So health is related to lifestyle choices but culture and environment also play a role – people in social groups tend to share same diet, drinking and exercise norms, and face same issues regarding drugs. Many families on low incomes can't escape cycle of poverty in deprived areas – so future generations get trapped in same attitudes and habits which lead to poor health. - evidence of health differences between areas which are very close to each other but with high income gap.

You could now look briefly at other factors which affect health such as geography and ethnicity – may reflect cultural differences (e.g. poor diet in Scotland; Muslim attitudes towards alcohol) – however, such differences are also tied to income – large parts of Scotland have lower average income and many ethnic groups have lower employment. Give some figures.

Your conclusion could highlight complexity of issues which affect health because factors are so inter-related – clearly income is crucial but not only factor - this means difficult for govt and NHS to achieve great improvements in health – very expensive, particularly when UK economy is undergoing cuts.

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*Another option in this question would be to spend more time on govt policies and mention the debate over individualist v collectivist view. If govt takes view that it will concentrate on lifestyle choices it may not succeed if income and social class is the major factor in health inequalities. On the other hand, if govt takes view that tackling income inequalities is the solution, then this is very complex and expensive particularly when the economy is facing problems.*

## Essay 6 - 2009

### Critically examine the success of recent government policies to reduce poverty.

Intro could explain that UK has seen consistent economic growth since WW2 but the wealth gap has continued – *relative* poverty affects millions – perhaps give figure on wealth of richest compared to poorest. Major parties accept need to redistribute wealth through tax and benefits but disagree on best way of doing so.

Briefly describe causes of poverty – unemployment, low pay, gender, race, age and region – some statistics but not too much detail because question is about govt policies and you must get on to these.

Next look at Govt policies – this will focus mainly on Labour govt policies since 1997 and their success – too early to judge policies of new coalition govt (but can mention their plans towards end of the answer). Labour promoted social inclusion and concentrated on getting people back to work as main way of ending poverty. Briefly describe some strategies such as Jobcentre Plus, New Deal, National Minimum Wage and Tax Credits – give some figures but avoid danger of going into too much detail.

Next could briefly look at benefit payments such as Jobseekers Allowance, Income support and Sure Start – again some stats but avoid getting bogged down.

Could then look at how successful policies were. Briefly what happened to unemployment & low pay – however employment gains may have been due to economic boom seen in many countries – recession likely to raise unemployment – current figures?

Could mention Labour success in tackling priorities of child poverty and pensioner poverty. However, required massive public (govt) spending – with recession this is no longer possible – cuts instead.

If time, could conclude with brief comment on coalition plans (e.g. for Universal Credit by 2013) but public spending cuts will dominate what they can do in the coming years so those in poverty may face a tough time. (Already figure for child poverty has stopped dropping, some expect rise in coming months.)

*Again, there are a number of ways of answering this question. The big danger is that you know a lot and could write a great deal – the question is about Govt policies so get onto discussing them quickly and keep an eye on the clock!*

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## **Essay 7 - 2010**

**Individual lifestyle choices limit health more than any other factor. Discuss?**

See Essay 4 above. This is much the same essay.

## **Essay 8 - 2010**

**To what extent have government policies reduced gender and/or ethnic inequalities?**

See Essay 3 above. This is the same essay. However, if you decide cover **only** gender or ethnic rather than both, you will obviously need to go into more detail.

# Electoral Systems, Voting and Political Attitudes

## Essay 9– 2008

### **Assess the influence of social class on voting behaviour.**

For this essay you are expected to look at the influence of social class on voting behaviour *as well as* the influence of other factors on voting behaviour. You should start with a brief intro which shows you know what the various factors are. Then it is probably best to spend time on looking at social class in some depth. Next you can cover the other factors – if you have time you may wish to look at one (e.g. the media) or two of them in some depth but not as much depth as social class.

There is a danger here of starting with the other factors (e.g. education, region, leaders) and spending too much time on these. Then, when you get to social class, you don't have time to go into depth. This gives the impression that you didn't know much about class and ended up failing to answer the question you were asked .... so start with social class as your first factor.

The same applies if you are asked to assess the influence of the media on voting behaviour. Start with the media before going on to look at other factors such as social class, etc.

You have good notes on each of the factors. If you revise these properly AND you keep an eye on the time, this should be a topic should be a good one for you.

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# Electoral Systems, Voting and Political Attitudes

## Essay 10– 2008

### **The Additional Member System gives voters more choice and better representation than does First Past the Post. Discuss.**

*Answers should cover the main voter “choice” and “representation” features of AMS and the main voter “choice” and “representation” features of FPTP.*

*There is a danger that you will not read the question and simply reel of a list of things you know about the different systems e.g. whether or not a system gives a strong stable government is not very relevant to this question. However, whether or not a system gives voters a fair choice, and whether or not it produces a balance of elected representatives which closely reflects the actual votes cast, is relevant. So think about what the question has asked for when you are answering.*

Your intro could be short and point out which systems represent are used in which parliament.

Next you could turn to AMS and mention - voters have two votes: constituency and regional list - no wasted votes – regional list MSPs used to balance up share of MSPs so reflects party's share of votes- (not wholly proportional, but better than FPTP) – smaller parties win seats – examples – parties can use list MSPs to increase minority representation and gender balance - voters not biased in voting for 'white middle class males' because the regional list ballot paper does not have names

AMS likely to encourage consensus and coalitions – so *more* voters represented in the govt – However coalitions negotiate and change policies – so voters don't get what policies they voted for so in this sense, can be seen as *less* representative – Also 2011 election was unusual did not produce a coalition though previous three elections did.

AMS also gives voters more representatives – each has 1 constit MSP and 7 regional list MSPs – keeps direct link between voters and representatives (particularly constituency MSP) - on the other hand, role of the regional/list members is obscure – to whom are they accountable? - voters or their party? – also the list gives parties power – they chose names of list MSPs, not voters.

FPTP - less choice because only one ballot paper – simple majority system - safe seats more likely which helps parties with strong concentrations of votes – no good coming 2<sup>nd</sup> everywhere – votes for other parties are wasted - so real choice for voters is limited to marginal seats where winner uncertain No proportionality in final result (share of MPs does not reflect party's share of votes) – parties often win overall majority with less than 50% of votes (e.g. in 2005 Labour - 55% of the seats with 36% of the votes – the lowest winning party vote share ever) - a large proportion of voters get neither an MP, nor the Government, nor the policy implementation that they voted for

Your brief conclusion could suggest AMS gives greater choice and better representation but factors such as policy compromises and parties rather than voters deciding *who* become regional list MSPs rather than the voters selecting them, means issues are more complex than may seem so at first.

*There are other relevant points (but of course you cannot mention everything in 22.5 mins:*

- *small parties in a coalition govt have real power – in 2003 Lib Dems came 4th but big say in govt*
- *unusual recent results – in 2010 FPTP gave coalition govt and 2011 gave an SNP government in with an overall majority – can be seen as exceptions or a change in the political climate.*

# Electoral Systems, Voting and Political Attitudes

## Essay 11– 2010

**“The Single Transferable Vote electoral system provides for better representation than First Past the Post.” Discuss.**

*Answers should show understanding of main features of the STV and FPTP electoral systems and effect of the STV and the FPTP electoral systems on the way that voters are represented.*

*There is a danger that you will not read the question and simply reel of a list of things you know about the different systems- read the question carefully and try to give information connected with what it is actually asking..*

Your intro could be short – mention electoral reform in the news due to recent referendum on AV. Real change seen in 2007 when STV was introduced for local govt elections in Scotland. FPTP still used at Westminster.

### STV

- large multi-member constituencies - voters list in order of preference - within & between parties.- candidates need to reach quota - 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, etc. preferences used until all members elected..

### FPTP

- UK Parliament elections - simple majority system - candidate with most wins - party with most MPs forms the government.

*There are many points you could go on to make when you compare the two systems – you won't have time for them all - try to give examples where you can ...*

STV is a system of (PR) more closely reflects party's share of votes – also each successful candidate must get at least some support from majority of voters (if quota is 50%)

- few votes are ‘wasted’ under STV and almost every voter gets at least partial representation.

- No need for tactical voting - (voting to keep another party out because own party has no hope)

- Voters can choose between the abilities of individual candidates within parties

- Coalitions much more likely - Scottish local election results in 2007 saw only two councils gain single-party control Glasgow and North Lanarkshire - most local government administrations made up of coalitions (21 of 32 Scottish councils have more than one party in the administration). so increase in ‘compromise politics’ - could be seen as representing more voters - however not be better representation as party promises in manifestos are broken in coalition negotiations

- STV gives more opportunity to choose female or minority ethnic candidates among those listed so result may be more representative of the whole population .

- STV breaks the direct link between voters and individual representative because of multi-member constituencies - however does away with safe seats for single members so representatives who want to be re-elected must work for all voters rather than just a narrow group of traditional supporters.

Could finish with comment that STV has radically changed local govt in Scotland – now more representative of those who voted - however small numbers vote in local govt elections and so in this sense not properly representative in any case.

# The People's Republic of China

## Essay 12– 2007

### **Critically examine the effects of social and economic reform in China.**

*Answers should show understanding of recent social and economic reform policies of the Chinese Government and the impact of these on Chinese society. Avoid political reforms in this answer but you could mention them in the passing if appropriate.*

*There are many ways to answer this. Some of the points you could mention are shown below but you will not have time to cover them all.*

Your intro could be short – mention Chinese people have far less freedom than people in UK. However communist govt has allowed social and economic reforms in last 30 years which have changed lives of millions.

Changes have been built on remarkable economic growth so could start with this. You could mention govt decision to permit free enterprise within communist system – discuss aspects of economic growth – rapid growth of middle classes, number of millionaires, etc. Relaxation of hukou – millions of migrant workers – needed for factories, etc. However impact on rural communities and those left behind. Conditions poor for many migrant workers – homelessness common in cities - risk of unemployment with world recession. - growth of inequalities between rich and poor, divide between rural & urban, etc.

Some have suffered in change – also rapid growth allows opportunities for more corruption - however, real standard of living for most has grown – has lessened demands for more freedoms from ordinary citizens - but this could change if economic growth slows due to world recession.

Other issues you could cover- growing contact with other countries through trade – opening up to influences from other countries – seen in growth of new media – however clashes over freedom (Google etc.)

Could also look at social impact of economic change – rapid growth of cities - whole towns & neighbourhoods moved – impact on environment. Growth of private education & private health for the middle classes – but many fail to benefit.

There are many other aspects you could mention but time is your enemy so be very careful.

Perhaps you could conclude by saying China has seen dramatic change due to greater social and economic freedoms in recent years. However, clear signs govt intends to keep tight control – those who complain and ask for greater changes can end up in serious trouble – dissidents thrown in jail for criticising communist govt.

# The People's Republic of China

## Essay 13– 2009

**Critically examine the view that there is little demand for political reform because of greater social and economic freedom.**

This is similar to Essay 12 (above) which asks you to critically examine the effects of social and economic reform in China. Therefore, you can use a the major elements of the answer but without going to quite so much depth because you obviously need to talk about the political aspect as well.

You should drop in the name China's political leader and refer to some of the minor (by our standards) political reforms the CPC has introduced (e.g. local elections in villages and more substantial reforms in Hong Kong). You could highlight that demand for political reform does not seem to be widespread – democracy is not part of Chinese culture as it is the UK and in any case the economic successes and increased social freedom seem to have limited calls for change – (e.g. row over Google is a big story in the west but many young people in China seem to be much less concerned by it – they see their lives and opportunities changing for the better in any case.

Also, continued growth of CPC (give figures) shows many people still seem to see it as a vital and justified presence in many aspects of their lives.

After covering these issues you could point that there may not be widespread calls for political change but small minority do call for change – met by govt refusal and sometimes brutal treatment – intimidation of political movements, crushing of revolt in Tibet, and labour camps and imprisonment for dissidents who speak out (Nobel Peace Prize winner 2010). This shows prospect for major political change is small.

(Possible conclusion) - Growing economic and political links between Chinese people and the rest of the world may bring demand for change in the years ahead. Also if China's economy fails to keep growing at same rate, could cause a lot of unemployment and widespread poverty which could feed protests and social unrest.

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# The People's Republic of China

## Essay 14– 2010

### **Critically examine the view that there is little opposition to the Communist Party in China.**

This is similar to Essay 12 and 13 about. However, while you would mention some of the major economic & social reforms, most of the essay must be about the political sphere.

You could start by describing the lack of widespread protests in China despite not having freedom we have in the UK - you could explain why this may be so - growth of economy and some social freedoms introduced – also Chinese people do not have tradition of democracy as we do. Mention key role of CPC – virtually same as the govt.

You could describe briefly about some of the economic success and reforms – avoid too much depth.

Could now go discuss some limited political freedoms introduced by CPC in recent years (e.g. elections in villages – other parties allowed to stand – but only if approved. Also set up in Hong Kong. Majority of Chinese seems to accept key role of CPC in many areas of life – millions still joining – not so with UK political parties.

However some groups do show opposition - but tend to be crushed if don't co-operate with govt. Now you could go on to dissidents, opposing political parties – Tibet compared to Hong Kong, etc.

Conclusion - could state there is some opposition but most citizens still seem to accept CPC as legitimate. However influences from outside may change this as China develops closer links. Also world recession could threaten growth of Chinese economy, and as standards of living begin to drop could lead to political unrest and growing opposition to CPC.

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# The USA

## Essay 15– 2009

### **Assess the effectiveness of Congress and the Supreme Court in checking the powers of the President.**

The work you did with Mrs McLure will help you answer this section.

For this essay, you need to show you understand the powers of the President and then highlight the ways in which Congress and the Supreme Court can check the powers of the President.

You could start by pointing out that the US President is often called the most powerful person in the world. However, the USA is a democracy not a dictatorship. Therefore the US constitution was set up in a way to provide check and balances on the powers of each element of the government.

You can't cover all the President's powers but those you could choose from include:

- determines foreign policy and diplomacy; appoints ambassadors and diplomats.
- may propose legislation (laws) at any time
- can issue rules/and instructions (Executive Orders)\* that have the force of law – these do not need Congressional approval but may be declared unconstitutional by Supreme Court. (\*173 in Bush's first term).
- submits the budget to Congress - can refuse to release money for legislation that he disapproves.
- can adjourn/recall Congress but Congress does not have to pass any laws during special sessions.
- may veto legislation. Must act within ten congressional working days of receiving a bill from Congress. In 2001-5, Bush was the first president since 1841 to get through 4-year term without using a veto.
- Bush's first use of the veto was in July 2006 (Stem Cell Research Enhancement Act). A two-thirds majority vote in both the Senate and the House can override a veto
- President leads executive of the federal government and nominates top staff and all federal judges (including the 9 Supreme Court Judges) - but Senate must confirm appointments by simple majority vote.
- Commander in Chief of armed forces (has power to wage war while constitutionally Congress declares and funds it); may call out the National Guard.
- Negotiates treaties. Congress scrutinises and a 2/3 Senate majority is required for ratification.
- may commute a sentence and issue a pardon at any time, even before a crime is charged
- the House of Representatives may impeach the President. The Senate conducts the trial.
- Members of Congress can 'filibuster' and delay legislation – forcing a compromise with the President.
- Supreme Court can declare the actions of any member of the executive branch, including the President, to be unconstitutional. (Judicial Review).
- Presidents (e.g. Bush) can find it difficult to get bills through Congress (before Democratic 2006 mid-term elections successes) if divisions in own party.
- presidential power traditionally thrives in emergency and crisis conditions.

Try to have examples – check Modernity for this and it would also be useful to know how mid-term elections in 2010 changed Obama's position with regard to Congress.

Another example for Obama would be his fight to get healthcare reform passed – also the problems he faced getting budgets through Congress to cope with massive economic crises he had to cope with when he took power.