

Enquiry Skills

When answering these questions don't produce a cramped paragraph with all the information crammed together. Space things out with short paragraphs for each main point you want to make and leave a line between the next short paragraph. This shows you know what you are doing and are well organised. Markers love marking such answers. They hate marking answers which are cramped, difficult to read and poorly organised.

Remember, this is taken from the excellent BBC Bitesize Modern Studies Standard Grade website. There are videos clips as well as short tests on this site which will be very helpful.

Types of Enquiry Skills Questions

There are two main types of Enquiry Skills to master for the Standard Grade paper –

a) Evaluating Questions b) Investigating Questions

For **Evaluating questions** you don't have to include knowledge and understanding in your answers. You'll be given sources which include all the information you need.

Evaluating questions will ask you to:

- Detect bias, exaggeration and the extent to which facts have been used selectively
- Make comparisons within and between sources
- Express support for your own opinion, or someone else's opinion

For **Investigating questions** you may need knowledge and understanding in your answers.

Investigating questions come in several stages and may ask you to -

- State a hypothesis
- Give relevant aims
- Choose a method of finding out information, if not given by the question
- Describe how you would find information using that method
- Explain its advantages and disadvantages
- Detect bias, exaggeration and selective use of facts

Lets look at Evaluating Questions in more detail by looking at the 3 things they may ask:

1. Detect bias, exaggeration and selective use of facts

At General Level you may be asked to spot the exaggerated statement and give a reason using evidence to explain it. You may find it helpful to substitute the word, 'wrong' for the words 'bias' or 'exaggeration' in a question. This will make it easier to understand and therefore answer.

At Credit Level, questions may use the phrase, 'to what extent has (NAME) been selective in their use of facts. The sources may be quite long and complex and the examples of selective use of facts will not be obvious. You'll have to explain your answer in some detail. It may be that part of the view is correct whilst other parts are not. What you have to do in answering this type of question is to come to an overall conclusion as to the degree of selectivity. You might use phrases such as -

- It could be that the person is *not selective* at all as all of the parts of the statement are true.
- *The person is being slightly selective.* The evidence shows that most of what he/she says is true or correct with only a little bit wrong or false. This could be 2 of the 3 sentences or points in the view being correct.
- *The person is being fairly selective.* The evidence shows that what he/she says has 2 of the 3 sentences or points in the view being incorrect.
- *The person is being very selective.* The evidence shows that all of what he/she says is wrong or false with none of the statement true or correct.

This means that the overall extent of selectivity goes from not selective to slightly selective to fairly selective to very selective.

Make comparisons within and between sources

At General Level, the questions will either ask you to spot differences between two sources or it will ask you to come to a conclusion about a subject. Bullet points will direct you to what you have to find.

At Credit Level, questions will usually have complex sources. The question will ask 'what conclusions can be drawn'. However, to make it obvious what you have to do, several bullet points will be listed so that you know exactly what it is you are looking for.

Questions which ask you to reach a conclusion might involve you looking for -

- Similarities
- Differences
- How things have changed over a period of time
- Things that are bigger or smaller.

Good words and phrases to use in answers to this type of question include -

“In comparison with . . .” “Compared to . . .” “More than / less than . . .”

Questions may ask you to draw conclusions about some of the following:

- The relationship between . . .
- The difference between . . .
- The link between . . .
- Progress towards . . .
- Changes in . . .
- The commitment of an organisation towards something in particular
- Something which is most like, or the most desirable
- If you are unsure what any of these ter

Express support for your own or someone else's opinion

To demonstrate enquiry skills, you will need to show that you can understand and judge information about social and political institutions, processes and issues. To do so you must be able to express support for a personal or given point of view.

At General Level, the sources your explanation will need some detail.

At Credit Level, there will be a mixture of written sources, tables and charts or graphs. You will be asked to choose one option over another. You will be asked to provide reasons for this using the evidence in the sources. You will also be asked to give reasons, using evidence, as to why you did not choose the other option.

Now lets look at Investigating Questions

You will need to know about methods used to research information for an investigation. These are *methods of enquiry*. It will help to know the good points and bad points of using a method.

Methods	Advantages	Disadvantages
Internet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Access a range of information from all over world - Faster than writing a letter - Available in most schools and homes. - Email questions - Instant contact 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Some sites are inaccurate or unreliable - Time consuming to read through all the websites - Some websites may have biased information - The information might not have been updated
Writing a letter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Send it to someone who is well informed about your topic - You decide what questions to ask 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The person to whom you wrote may not answer your questions - The person you are writing to may not reply in time or they may not reply at all
Interview	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - You can prepare questions in advance - You can add extra questions during the interview - It can be recorded and played back 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - You may not be able to find a suitable person to interview - The person being interviewed might try to take over the interview - The person being interviewed might not give honest answers
Questionnaires	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - You can collect information from a large number of people and therefore make generalisations - You can set the questions you ask 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - It is time consuming to conduct the questionnaire and collate the data - People may refuse to answer or not tell the truth
Library	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - It will store back copies of newspapers - You can gain access to internet - Staff are available to help with search 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Information in books may be out of date - You cannot withdraw reference books - Some books/news may be missing
Visit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - First hand experience - Able to draw own conclusions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Not always possible or appropriate to visit somewhere

There have been changes to question in recent years. Instead of asking you to describe the advantages and/or disadvantages of certain methods, you may be given an example of a particular method. This could be some questions from a letter, questionnaire or an e-mail and you would be expected to explain what was good or bad about some of these questions. You could also be given the Homepage from a particular Internet site such as the BBC and you would be asked to explain how you could get the best out of that site to gather information for the given investigative topic.

Investigating Skills

This type of question is different from all the other enquiry skills questions because you may not get any information from sources. To do well in you may need to have a certain amount of knowledge and understanding to answer.

The question is posed in several stages -

First you are told about a broad topic and to imagine you will carry out an investigation into some aspect of it. The topic will be described in a box and identified by a large question mark.

You are then asked to -

State a hypothesis. Take note here, it's a statement you are asked for and, during the investigation, you will prove whether it's true or false. Don't ever be tempted to write a hypothesis in the form of a question.

Give relevant aims which will help you prove your hypothesis. This is where the question approach is useful. You would do well to start this part of the investigation by saying "To find out..."

The third stage may be to *choose a method of finding out information* for the investigation.

Your method should be relevant or suitable, because you'll be asked to apply it to the aims you picked earlier. You are asked to describe, in detail, how you would find information using that method.

Not just that, *you are asked to explain why it's a good method* of finding out information for your investigation and what its shortcomings might be. In other words, *you should explain its advantages and disadvantages.*

Sometimes, instead of being asked to choose a method of enquiry, you'll be told which method to use. Even then, you'll be asked to explain its advantages and disadvantages.

Examiner's view

"This complete question on planning an investigation is worth 8 marks at General level and 10 marks at Credit level. It is **not as difficult** as it can sometimes seem, so it is worth getting to grips with the way it should be done."

Worked Example /

Worked Example A - You have been asked to carry out an investigation into the voting systems used in elections in Scotland.

This will help you prepare for this type of question.

Question: State a relevant hypothesis for your investigation (Enquiry skills, 2 marks)

Answer: A hypothesis is a statement you intend to test in your investigation.

Don't put a question mark at the end of your hypothesis. You might say -

"STV is a good voting system for Local Government Elections in Scotland"

or "People in Scotland are confused by the many different voting systems"

Both of these are good because the topic has been expanded in 2 ways.

STV has been identified as a voting system in Scotland **and** has been identified also as the system used in local government.

You could do exactly the same with the Additional Member System (AMS). E.g. AMS is a good voting system for elections to the Scottish Parliament.

The second hypothesis above looks at the issue in a different way. It recognises that Scotland has a number of different voting systems in use **and** makes the point that this might lead to confusion amongst the electorate.

You may now be asked ...

Question: To help you prove or disprove your hypothesis, give two aims which you think would be best for this investigation. (Enquiry Skills, 2 marks)

Answer: You might say -

To find out how the STV system will work

To find out if people in my town think it will be a good voting system.

or

To find out the differing voting systems used in Scotland

To find out what people in my town think about the different voting systems that they use

You may now be asked to choose a method of enquiry for your investigation. You may be given several options or you may be asked to come up with an appropriate method yourself. For example: a questionnaire or an interview with a local councillor.

Let's say you choose a questionnaire as your method of enquiry.

The next part of the question would ask you to select one of the aims you outlined earlier and describe, in detail, how you would find information for it, using your chosen method of enquiry. (Enquiry Skills, 2 marks)

Question: Then you may be asked to choose a method of enquiry for your investigation. You may be given several options or you may be asked to come up with an appropriate method yourself.

Answer: To do this well you must pay attention to detail and put the steps in the correct order. A good answer would be -

I would put together a questionnaire. I would do this by asking a selection of both 'open' and 'closed' questions. In the 'open' questions, I would give people the opportunity to say what they think by writing in their answers. The 'closed' questions, which people tend to prefer, would mean that respondents would only have to tick a box where the answer corresponded with what they thought. I would hand the questionnaires out to a mixture of people taking into account their sex and age.

Question:

And finally you would give advantages and disadvantages of your chosen method of enquiry as a source of information for this investigation. (Enquiry skills, 4 marks)

Answer:

To answer this well you might say that ...

Two advantages of a questionnaire are that if they are closed questions then you can easily get a picture of what people believe to be the case and if you get enough people answering then your answers can have some truth about them. Two disadvantages, on the other hand, are that it isn't always possible to get access to a lot of people or people are not keen to complete the questionnaire for you. Also, if your questions are open, then it can be quite difficult to draw real conclusions if people say lots of different things.

And there you are, ten marks in the bag!

Worked Example B - Health care in the USA

You have been asked to carry out an investigation into health care in the USA.

Question: State a relevant hypothesis for your investigation. (Enquiry Skills, 2 marks)

Answer You might say -

All races in the USA get similar health care.

Question: Give two aims to help prove or disprove your hypothesis.

Answer: To find out if health care in the USA is good for some and bad for others.

To find out if blacks have the worst health care in the USA.

To find out the reasons for poor health care amongst different ethnic groups

These are all good aims because the topic has been expanded in 2 ways.

Question: Describe how you would find relevant websites to help with your investigation.

Answer: I would log on to a search engine such as 'Google' or 'Yahoo'. Then I would type key words into the search box such as "'health care statistics" USA'. I would read through the information on the websites, adding the most useful sites to my 'Favourites'. I might then decide to print off the relevant information for my investigation.

Question: Explain why using email might not be a good method of enquiry for this topic.

Answer: Email might not be a good method because I might not know anyone that I could send questions to. Even if I got a few email addresses, it may well be that the people replying would be biased in their answers.

And there you are, ten marks in the bag again!

Worked Example C - Women and politics

You have been asked to carry out an investigation into the representation of women in politics.

Question: State a relevant hypothesis for your investigation.

Answer: The Scottish Parliament is more representative of the percentage of women in the population than the House of Commons.

Question: Give two relevant aims to help prove or disprove your hypothesis.

Answer: To find out what percentage of MSP's and MP's are female.

To find out why women are more likely to be elected to the Scottish Parliament than the House of Commons.

Question: You decide to conduct an interview with an MSP to help you research your aims. Describe how you would organise such an interview.

Answer: I would first write a letter to a local female MSP asking if they would be willing to be interviewed for my investigation. If they were happy to be interviewed I would then arrange a time and a place to conduct the interview. At this point I would write down the questions which I would ask during the interview. I would need to ask to be allowed time out of school if the interview was during the week, I would also have to investigate how to get to their office. I would call the day before the interview in order to check that it was still convenient. I would then ensure that that I arrived in plenty of time for my appointment.

Question: You also decide to write a letter to your MP in order to find out why they think there are fewer female MP's. Describe, in detail, the advantages, and disadvantages, of using this method for your investigation.

Answer: A letter would be a good method for my investigation because I could ask specific questions which would help me to answer my aims. Writing a letter is a cheap method of enquiry and so I would be able to send off letters to several MP's in order to get a range of answers.

However, writing a letter also has disadvantages. Some people do not respond to letters and so I might end up not receiving any information for my investigation. Letters can also be time-consuming and there may be a time delay between sending my letter off and receiving a reply. A letter also does not let me write any follow-up questions to the answers that I may receive.

And there you are, another ten marks in the bag!