



Higher National Unit specification: general information

Unit title: Politics B: The United Kingdom and Scotland

Unit code: FK86 34

Superclass: EA

Publication date: May 2013

Source: Scottish Qualifications Authority

Version: 04

Unit purpose

This Unit is designed to develop candidates' knowledge and understanding of the UK and Scottish systems of government. Candidates will study the nature of the UK constitution and decision-making processes, forces that impact on the constitution and decision-making processes, the roles and functions of the UK and Scottish Parliaments and Executives, parties and pressure groups, and the key electoral systems operating within this context.

Candidates will also study concepts which relate to Scotland's constitutional position within the United Kingdom. This Unit is intended for those candidates who wish to develop their knowledge and understanding of politics and for those who wish to use it as a basis for further study.

On completion of the Unit the candidate should be able to:

- 1 Analyse key topics relating to the governance of the United Kingdom.
- 2 Analyse and evaluate key aspects of the Scottish devolved system of governance in relation to political concepts.

Recommended prior knowledge and skills

Candidates should possess good communication skills. Other knowledge, skills and experience relevant to the Unit would also be beneficial.

The previous study of Politics through Units and National Qualifications at SCQF levels 5 or 6, or other similar qualifications, is desirable but not essential. Candidates would benefit from achievement of HN Unit *Politics A: An Introduction to Political Theories of the State*

Ultimately, entry is at the discretion of the centre.

General information (cont)

Credit points and level

2 Higher National Unit credits at SCQF level 7: (16 SCQF credit points at SCQF level 7*)

**SCQF credit points are used to allocate credit to qualifications in the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF). Each qualification in the Framework is allocated a number of SCQF credit points at an SCQF level. There are 12 SCQF levels, ranging from Access 1 to Doctorates.*

Core Skills

There are opportunities to develop the Core Skills of *Communication* at SCQF level 6 and *Information and Communication Technology* at SCQF level 5 in this Unit, although there is no automatic certification of Core Skills or Core Skills components.

Context for delivery

If this Unit is delivered as part of a Group Award, it is recommended that it should be taught and assessed within the subject area of the Group Award to which it contributes.

Assessment

This Unit will be assessed using two instruments of assessment, as follows:

- 1 Outcome 1 will be assessed by one closed book instrument of assessment covering all evidence requirements for the Outcome.
- 2 Outcome 2 will be assessed by one open book assessment covering all evidence requirements for the Outcome.

An exemplar instrument of assessment and marking guidelines has been produced to indicate the national standard of achievement required at SCQF level 7

Higher National Unit specification: statement of standards

Unit title: Politics B: The United Kingdom and Scotland

Unit code: FK86 34

The sections of the Unit stating the Outcomes, Knowledge and/or Skills, and Evidence Requirements are mandatory.

Where evidence for Outcomes is assessed on a sample basis, the whole of the content listed in the Knowledge and/or Skills section must be taught and available for assessment. Candidates should not know in advance the items on which they will be assessed and different items should be sampled on each assessment occasion.

Outcome 1

Analyse key topics relating to the governance of the United Kingdom

Knowledge and/or Skills

- ◆ six key topics relating to the governance of the United Kingdom
- ◆ main features of each topic
- ◆ relationship of each topic to the governance of the United Kingdom
- ◆ role and functions of each topic in the UK political system

Evidence Requirements

Candidates will need to provide evidence to demonstrate their Knowledge and/or Skills by showing that they can:

- ◆ analyse the importance of each topic to the governance of the United Kingdom
- ◆ explain the main features of each topic
- ◆ discuss the relationship of topics to the governance of the United Kingdom
- ◆ analyse the roles and functions of political topics within the UK political system

The knowledge and skills for this Outcome will be sampled in the assessment. Candidates will be assessed on **three** topics chosen from the topics listed in the Support Notes.

This part of the Unit will be assessed by a closed book assessment, which means candidates should be assessed without the use of notes, textbooks, VLE or other materials in a supervised setting.

Note: Topic areas are listed in the **Guidance on content and context**.

Higher National Unit specification: statement of standards (cont)

Unit title: Politics B: The United Kingdom and Scotland

Assessment Guidelines

There is a wide variety of methods of assessment that would allow candidates to meet the evidence requirements. The following are suggestions and there may be other methods that would be suitable. Centres are reminded that Prior Verification would help to ensure that the national standard is being met.

This assessment will take the form of a set of unseen structured questions requiring a response of approximately 1000 words across all questions *or* an essay, also requiring approximately 1000 words *or* an oral response to set questions requiring a response in sustained detail for approximately 8 minutes *or* another form of oral presentation of approximately 8 minutes duration *or* any other method that is appropriate to meet the evidence requirements.

Candidates will know the broad area to be assessed one week prior to the assessment date. It is likely that if it is a written assessment it will take between 90 minutes and two hours to complete.

In response to the task set, the candidate must convey complex ideas in a well-structured and coherent form.

NB: It is important that the language used in this assessment instrument reflects SCQF level 7 in each type of task.

Higher National Unit specification: statement of standards (cont)

Unit title: Politics B: The United Kingdom and Scotland

Outcome 2

Analyse and evaluate key aspects of the Scottish devolved system of governance in relation to political concepts

Knowledge and/or Skills

- ◆ key developments from 1979 in the process of establishing devolution
- ◆ powers and functions of the Scottish Parliament and Executive
- ◆ impact of devolution on Scotland
- ◆ impact of proportional representation on the Scottish political system
- ◆ debates regarding the concepts of unionism, devolution and separatism

Evidence Requirements

Candidates will need to provide evidence to demonstrate their Knowledge and/or Skills by showing that they can:

- ◆ Describe the key developments from 1979 in the process of establishing devolution
- ◆ Analyse the powers and functions of the Scottish Parliament and Executive
- ◆ Evaluate the impact of devolution on Scotland
- ◆ Evaluate the impact of proportional representation on the Scottish political system
- ◆ Analyse the debates regarding the concepts of unionism, devolution and separatism in relation to Scotland's constitutional position within the UK

The assessment for Outcome 2 will be open book (with access to materials e.g. textbooks, notes, VLE). Regardless of the assessment method chosen, the candidate must submit a bibliography presented in a standard referencing format such as, Harvard.

Note: Topic areas are listed in the **Guidance on content and context**.

Assessment Guidelines

The task will be handed out to be completed at a date specified by the Centre. It should be completed according to a prearranged format and could take the form of an open book essay *or* set of structured questions with an expected candidate response of approximately 2000 words *or* an individual oral presentation *or* poster exhibition with expected candidate's response of 15 minutes in presentation *or* explanation of poster, a pod cast *or* any other method that is appropriate to meet the evidence requirements. It is recommended that oral presentations are recorded in some form for external verification purposes. Candidates could also provide the evidence requirements in the form of an individual Blog, or creation of a website, with approximately 2000 words.

NB: It is important that the language used in this assessment instrument reflects SCQF level 7 in each type of task.

Higher National Unit specification: support notes

Unit title: Politics B: The United Kingdom and Scotland

This part of the Unit specification is offered as guidance. The support notes are not mandatory.

While the exact time allocated to this Unit is at the discretion of the centre, the notional design length is 80 hours.

Guidance on the content and context for this Unit

This is one of a suite of Units that covers Politics within the HNC/D Social Sciences Group Awards. The Unit is designed to further develop concepts learned in HN Unit Politics A: *An Introduction to Political Theories of the State* and complement future learning in HN Unit Politics C: *The United States and the European Union* and HN Unit Politics D: *Political Representation*. The Unit can be taught as a free-standing Unit or as part of the HNC/D Social Sciences Group Awards.

The aim of this Unit is to provide an understanding of the governance of, and the political systems used in, the United Kingdom. It is designed to develop an understanding of the political structures and decision-making processes at Westminster and at Holyrood. It is further aimed at providing an understanding of the roles and functions of political parties, pressure groups and the application and significance of the UK and Scottish parliamentary electoral systems. In addition, candidates will consider the debates concerning Scotland's constitutional position within the United Kingdom.

Outcome 1 of this Unit will focus on **six** political topics:

- ◆ The UK Constitution
- ◆ The UK Executive
- ◆ The UK Parliament
- ◆ The UK party political system
- ◆ The UK parliamentary electoral system
- ◆ Pressure groups in the UK

In relation to (1) candidates should be introduced to the nature and development of the UK Constitution through an understanding of the unwritten nature of the constitution and how it has developed as a result of statute law, precedent and common law and shifts in the locus of sovereignty. It is also important that they understand the relevance of limited government, bicameralism and devolution.

In relation to (2) candidates should explain and discuss the role, functions and powers of the Prime Minister and the Cabinet. Candidates should understand the historical development of each office and examine arguments on the nature of Prime Ministerial power and diminishing Cabinet responsibility under dominant Prime Ministers. Knowledge of contemporary political issues provoking debate about Prime Ministerial power should be evidenced.

Higher National Unit specification: support notes (cont)

Unit title: Politics B: The United Kingdom and Scotland

In relation to (3) candidates should be aware of the roles and functions of both Houses of Parliament, the historical reasons for the dominance of the Commons, the legislative process and the roles and functions of Members of Parliament. They should explain Private Member legislation and the committee system.

In relation to (4) candidates must be aware of the development of the party system and the nature of UK party government. They should show evidence of understanding the roles and functions of political parties in the UK, the whip system and candidate selection procedures.

In relation to (5) the candidate should analyse and evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the current electoral system as utilized in UK parliamentary elections.

In relation to (6) candidates should explain and discuss the role and functions of pressure groups, the typology of pressure groups, the debate over the role pressure groups occupy in a modern democracy and analyse examples of pressure group activity and their impact on decision-making and the legislative process.

Outcome 2 of this Unit will focus on **five** political topics:

- ◆ The process of establishing devolution in Scotland
- ◆ The Scottish Parliament
- ◆ The Scottish Executive
- ◆ The Scottish parliamentary electoral system
- ◆ Concepts relating to Scotland's constitutional position

In relation to (1) candidates should analyse the key developments in the process which led to the establishment of a devolved Scottish Parliament and Government.

In relation to (2) candidates should understand the powers and functions of the Scottish Parliament, plus those powers reserved to Westminster. They should evaluate the impact on Scotland of some of the Scottish Parliament's main policy initiatives.

In relation to (3) candidates should be aware of the powers and functions of the Scottish Executive. They should analyse the effects of coalition and minority administration on the ability of an executive to legislate and implement policy decisions.

In relation to (4) the candidate should analyse and evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the Additional Member System as utilised in Scottish parliamentary elections.

In relation to (5) candidates should explain and discuss the debates regarding the concepts of unionism, devolution and separatism in relation to Scotland's current, and potential future position.

It should be stressed to candidates that it is essential that they keep themselves informed and up-to-date on current affairs relating to both UK and Scottish political developments.

Higher National Unit specification: support notes (cont)

Unit title: Politics B: The United Kingdom and Scotland

Guidance on the delivery and assessment of this Unit

Centres should structure the teaching programme to allow time for development of Core Skills and other transferable skills and for assessment practice within the notional hours suggested.

Centres should design appropriate assessment instruments based on methods that are suitable in allowing candidates to meet the evidence requirements. These can be written or oral (depending on the needs of the candidates and the organisational aspects for the Centre in choosing particular methods). If an oral method is chosen, it is recommended that Centres record this (either by DVD or digital recorder etc.) or provide assessor notes on the presentation for External Verification purposes. Oral presentations must be done individually as each candidate has to show evidence of meeting all evidence requirements, so a group presentation would not be suitable.

If the Centre is using a Blog or creation of a website as the way of gathering evidence, this should not be in the public domain. Rather it should be on an Intranet or private area of a VLE to reduce the likelihood of plagiarism. Authentication of the candidate's work is essential. It would be helpful to collect notes or PPT presentation materials from the candidate as further evidence of meeting SCQF level 7 in the presentation.

Centres should make sure they can authenticate a candidate's work for the Outcome 2. This may be done by questioning a candidate about their work, by seeing drafts of work under construction, by having partial write-up in presence of assessor or by using an anti-plagiarism tool, such as Turnitin or SafeAssign, which checks Internet sites.

Remediation for Outcome 1 could be done by oral clarification for minor omissions or to clarify minor detail. If additional information is required this can be added, as long as it is in total approximately 100 words or less per outcome. If these conditions cannot be met, then the candidate should be reassessed using a different set of questions for Outcome 1.

Remediation for Outcome 2 should be done by a review of the original work. Candidates should be asked to hand in a complete piece of work, with amendments incorporated in the appropriate context, rather than a large add-on at the end, or asked to fully rewrite their work to a prescribed format if it did not meet requirements. Oral clarification could be used for minor omissions or to clarify minor detail. If it is thought appropriate that a candidate tackle a different topic or question, then that new submission would count as a reassessment.

In oral work, candidates can be questioned by the assessor at the end of their presentation or explanation, where minor omissions occur, or where clarity is required. This would help to reduce the need for reassessment. However, where more work is required to meet the evidence requirements (eg where the quality of evidence is poor in a presentation) another presentation of the same duration, on the same topic or question as the original would be required. Only where a different topic or question is attempted would this be classed as reassessment.

Higher National Unit specification: support notes (cont)

Unit title: Politics B: The United Kingdom and Scotland

Opportunities for developing Core Skills

The delivery and assessment of this Unit may contribute towards the development of Core Skills of *Communication* and *Information and Communication Technology*. It can also support the development of other transferable skills, such as, essay writing, referencing, citation and bibliography skills and thinking, analytical and critical skills.

It is possible to develop **Communication at SCQF level 6** level if the assessment takes the form of an essay/report or oral presentation. **For written communication at SCQF level 6 the skill is: produce well structured written communication on complex topics.** To develop this skill candidates can be encouraged in both formative and summative assessment to present all essential ideas/information and supporting detail in a logical and effective order; use a structure that is organised and use paragraphing to make distinctions between facts, opinions, arguments and conclusion, use a format, layout, and word choice which are appropriate to the content and context, and use spelling, punctuation, vocabulary and sentence structures which are consistently accurate. It is part of the evidence requirements for Outcome 2 to ensure candidates convey complex ideas in a well-structured and coherent way. This can be stressed in delivery and in formative work, as well as being considered in summative assessment.

The candidates could be tasked with producing a written communication which presents, analyses, and evaluates a substantial body of information. These skills can be developed through formative activities, such as shorter essays on each topic, without being formally assessed for certification of Core Skill. The topics that Centres can choose are complex so should easily fit with SCQF level 6.

It is important to develop report writing or essay-writing skills for candidates' future progression. In doing this candidates should also be encouraged to use an appropriate referencing method, such as Harvard, for any formative or summative essays. Referencing, citation and bibliography skills are best developed using the vehicle of formative essay writing. The Assessment for Outcome 2 could be a written report that would be to a prescribed format but would include the need for referencing and citation skills.

For oral communication at SCQF level 6 the skill is: produce and respond to oral communication on a complex topic. In the summative assessment for Outcome 2 the candidate could be encouraged to give a detailed oral presentation on the analysis and evaluation of the concepts: unionism, devolution and separatism in relation to Scotland's constitutional position, which would be a complex topic. The specific skills of using an appropriate level of vocabulary, consistent spoken language structures and formality, conveying all essential information, opinions, or ideas with supporting detail accurately and coherently, and with varied emphasis as appropriate and responding to others, taking account of their contributions would be developed in an oral presentation. Although a summative assessment would require individual work and individual presentation, a formative assessment could be constructed that would encourage candidates to work in a small group, with a few people contributing to the presentation. This may allow a candidate to experience the demands of oral presentation before choosing this as an option for summative assessment of the Unit (if Centre is able to give a choice).

Higher National Unit specification: support notes (cont)

Unit title: Politics B: The United Kingdom and Scotland

For the Core Skill of Information and Communication Technology at SCQF level 5 the skills are: 'Accessing Information, use ICT independently, effectively, and responsibly to access information within a range of tasks' and 'Providing/Creating Information, use ICT independently, effectively, and responsibly to carry out a range of processing tasks'. This Unit can help to develop such skills by the use of mini formative presentations using PowerPoint or other ICT presentation tool that will also support the development of oral communication. A summative assessment using ICT presentation methods is also possible. Specific areas of accessing information using Internet searches or VLE use and providing and creating information can be developed in such tasks. Thinking, analytical and critical skills could be developed by posing questions at appropriate points in the delivery, enabling discussion and promoting the need for candidates to take responsibility for learning by encouraging the development of research skills via the Internet or using text books.

Curriculum for Excellence

The Curriculum for Excellence aspires to place learners at the centre of the curriculum and develop their capacities as Successful Learners, Confident Individuals, Responsible Citizens and Effective Contributors. The four capacities will be developed throughout this Unit.

This unit will develop the literacy and communication skills of the learners by way of formative and summative assessments. Independent learning is required throughout this unit, whilst the opportunity is available for group learning through formative tasks and in the summative assessment for Outcome 2. The subject of politics demands independent thinking, and through reasoned evaluation encourages learners to reach satisfactory conclusions. Further opportunity is offered to develop technological skills by way of researching via the internet, the production of word documents, PowerPoint presentations, blogs and/or the creation of a website. Collectively these skills contribute towards the creation of a **Successful Learner**.

Time management skills should improve during the delivery of this Unit, as should the ability to relate to others through formative tasks. The topics in Politics B should allow the learner to develop their own thoughts of the world around them, and they will be given the opportunity to express these views within the classroom setting. This should lend to the emergence of a **Confident Individual**, particularly if they gain success in the achievement of the Unit.

Politics B can also contribute to learners becoming **Responsible Citizens** by allowing the opportunity to develop knowledge and understanding the UK and Scottish systems of government. Candidates will be encouraged to develop a more positive view of their role as a citizen within UK/Scottish society. Furthermore, informed, ethical views of complex constitutional issues can be developed, as can an understanding of different political points of view.

Higher National Unit specification: support notes (cont)

Unit title: Politics B: The United Kingdom and Scotland

Learners can become **Effective Contributors** to society by learning to work together effectively in teams within the class setting. This can be achieved through group-work where they can apply critical thinking within new contexts. In planning group tasks, evaluating data and presenting their findings, learners will also develop problem solving skills. Both oral and written communication skills will also be developed. This can be achieved through written work, individual PowerPoint presentations, and the creation of blogs and websites.

All these skills can be developed within the Unit.

Open learning

This Unit could be delivered by open or distance learning; however, it would require planning by the centre to ensure sufficiency and authenticity of candidate evidence.

Arrangements would have to be made to ensure that the assessment for Outcome 1 was conducted closed book and under supervision. For Outcome 2 a written response in the form of an essay or answers to structured questions could be posted or emailed to the assessor or uploaded onto a VLE. An oral presentation could be used that would be recorded on DVD and sent to the assessor, or could be done using video-conferencing or web-link and observed by the assessor.

Disabled candidates and/or those with additional support needs

The additional support needs of individual candidates should be taken into account when planning learning experiences, selecting assessment instruments, or considering whether any reasonable adjustments may be required. Further advice can be found on our website www.sqa.org.uk/assessmentarrangements.

History of changes to Unit

Version	Description of change	Date
02	Page 4 - Need for a bibliography removed.	01/09/11
03	Clarification of reassessment and remediation statement.	13/11/12
04	Time for closed book assessment extended to two hours.	08/05/13

© Scottish Qualifications Authority 2011, 2012, 2013

This publication may be reproduced in whole or in part for educational purposes provided that no profit is derived from reproduction and that, if reproduced in part, the source is acknowledged.

Additional copies of this Unit specification can be purchased from the Scottish Qualifications Authority. Please contact the Customer Contact Centre, telephone 0845 279 1000.

General information for candidates

Unit title: Politics B: The United Kingdom and Scotland

This Unit will introduce you to the UK and Scottish political systems. It will allow you to understand the nature of the UK Constitution and the institutions and decision-making processes in Westminster and Holyrood. It will also enable you to understand the nature and purpose of the different electoral systems and to comprehend some of the forces impacting on modern day UK and Scottish politics, such as pressure groups, alternative electoral systems and the effects of proportional representation on the Scottish political system and the parties operating within it. In addition, debates regarding the concepts of unionism, devolution and separatism in relation to Scotland's current and potential future position will be studied.

This Unit will be assessed using two instruments of assessment as follows:

One closed book assessment taking the form of a set of unseen structured questions requiring a response of approximately 1000 words across all questions *or* an essay, also requiring approximately 1000 words *or* an oral response to set questions requiring a response in sustained detail for approximately 8 minutes *or* another form of oral presentation of approximately 8 minutes duration *or* any other method that is appropriate to meet the evidence requirements. You will know the broad area to be assessed one week prior to the assessment date. It is likely that if it is a written assessment it will take between 90 minutes and two hours to complete.

One open book assessment, to be completed at a date specified by the Centre, and according to a prearranged format. It could take the form of an open book essay *or* set of structured questions with an expected candidate response of approximately 2000 words *or* an individual oral presentation *or* poster exhibition with expected candidate's response of 15 minutes in presentation or explanation of poster, a pod cast *or* any other method that is appropriate to meet the evidence requirements. Alternatively, you could provide the evidence in the form of an individual Blog, or by creating a website, with approximately 2000 words.

As you progress through the Unit material, you will be encouraged to develop the Core Skills of *Communication* at SCQF level 6 and *Information and Communication Technology* at SCQF level 5, by the types of activities you will experience.

You will also be given opportunities throughout this Unit to develop as a successful learner, a confident individual, a responsible citizen and an effective contributor.