



Higher National Unit specification: general information

Unit title: Politics C: The United States and the European Union

Unit code: FK87 35

Superclass: EA

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Unit purpose

This Unit is designed to develop a candidate's ability to analyse the US and EU systems of government. It requires candidates to critically evaluate each system in relation to a separate political concept. Candidates will study the nature of the US Constitution and its impact on the decision-making processes of the Federal Executive, Legislature and Judiciary. These branches of government, and the relationships between them, and between them and the States, will be evaluated in relation to the concept of the separation of powers.

Candidates will also study the EU system of government by examining the EU Parliament, Commission and Council of Ministers. These institutions and the relationships between them, and between them and Member States, will be evaluated in relation to the concept of national sovereignty.

This Unit is intended for those candidates who already have a basis of knowledge and understanding of politics and wish to develop this further.

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

- 1 Analyse and evaluate the system of government of the United States in relation to the concept of the separation of powers.
- 2 Analyse and evaluate the system of government of the European Union in relation to the concept of national sovereignty.

General information (cont)

Recommended prior knowledge and skills

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

In addition, candidates would benefit from achievement of HN Unit *Politics A: An Introduction to Political Theories of the State* and HN Unit *Politics B: The United Kingdom and Scotland*.

Ultimately, entry is at the discretion of the centre.

Credit points and level

2 Higher National Unit credits at SCQF level 8: (16 SCQF credit points at SCQF level 8*)

**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 in this Unit, 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 8

Higher National Unit specification: statement of standards

Unit title: Politics C: The United States and the European Union

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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 and evaluate the system of government of the United States in relation to the concept of the separation of powers

Knowledge and/or Skills

- ◆ The contents and nature of the US Constitution
- ◆ The powers and functions of the US Executive
- ◆ The powers and functions of the US Legislature
- ◆ The powers and functions of the US Judiciary
- ◆ The nature of the relationship between each of the three federal branches of government as a result of the separation of powers
- ◆ The nature of the relationship between Federal Government and the individual States as a result of the separation of powers

Evidence Requirements

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

- ◆ Analyse the contents and nature of the US Constitution
- ◆ Analyse the powers and functions of the US Executive, Legislature and Judiciary
- ◆ Evaluate the nature of the relationship between each of the federal branches of government as a result of the separation of powers
- ◆ Evaluate the nature of the relationship between Federal Government and the individual States as a result of the separation of powers

Candidates will be assessed on a sample of **three** from the first four, and on **one** from the last two Knowledge and Skills items.

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 C: The United States and the European Union

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 90 minutes to complete. In response to the task set, the candidate must convey complex ideas in a well-structured and coherent form. The sample for assessment should be changed on each assessment occasion.

NB: It is important that the language used in this assessment instrument reflects SCQF level 8 in each type of task.

Outcome 2

Analyse and evaluate the system of government of the European Union in relation to the concept of national sovereignty.

Knowledge and/or Skills

- ◆ The powers and functions of the EU Parliament
- ◆ The powers and functions of the EU Commission
- ◆ The powers and functions of the Council of Ministers
- ◆ The nature of the relationship between each of the institutions
- ◆ The nature of the relationship between the European Union and the individual Member States with regard to national sovereignty

Evidence Requirements

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

- ◆ Analyse the powers and functions of the EU Parliament, Commission and Council of Ministers
- ◆ Evaluate the nature of the relationship between each of the institutions
- ◆ Evaluate the relationship between the European Union and the individual Member States with regard to national sovereignty

Higher National Unit specification: statement of standards (cont)

Unit title: Politics C: The United States and the European Union

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 8 in each type of task.

Higher National Unit specification: support notes

Unit title: Politics C: The United States and the European Union

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 Units Politics A: *An Introduction to Political Theories of the State* and Politics B: *The United Kingdom and Scotland*, and complement future learning in HN Unit Politics D: *Political Representation*. The Unit can be taught as a free-standing Unit or as part of the HND Social Sciences Group Award.

The aim of this Unit is to provide an understanding of the US and EU systems of governance. It is designed to develop an understanding of the political structures and decision-making processes at Washington and at Strasbourg/Brussels. It is further aimed at providing an understanding of the relationships that exist between the various bodies within both of these political systems, and their relationship with member states. In addition, candidates will consider debates concerning the separation of powers in relation to the US, and national sovereignty in relation to the EU.

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

- 1 The US Constitution
- 2 The US Executive
- 3 The US Legislature
- 4 The US Judiciary
- 5 The nature of the relationship between each of the federal branches of government as a result of the separation of powers
- 6 The nature of the relationship between Federal Government and the individual States as a result of the separation of powers

In relation to (1) candidates should be introduced to the contents and nature of the US Constitution through an understanding that, although not explicitly mentioned, it provides for a federal form of governance which is reliant on the imposition of a series of checks and balances between its constituent parts. They should analyse the various articles and the subsequent amendments; the former providing rules on what each government body, and the states, can and cannot do, the latter providing a Bill of Rights for American citizens. Attention should be given to the fact that, unlike the UK, the US has a constitution which is written, codified and entrenched.

In relation to (2) candidates should analyse the powers and functions of the US President. They should understand the constitutional position of the President and the executive and legislative powers that the role holds. Contemporary political issues provoking debate about Presidential legislative, policy and leadership initiatives should be evidenced.

Higher National Unit specification: support notes (cont)

Unit title: Politics C: The United States and the European Union

In relation to (3) candidates should analyse the powers and functions of the US Legislature. They should understand the constitutional position of Congress; the roles and functions of both Houses of Congress; the powers of Congress; the legislative process; the committee system in both Houses, and relationships with the executive and the judiciary.

In relation to (4) candidates must analyse the powers and functions of the US Judiciary. They should show evidence of understanding the constitutional power and authority of the Supreme Court; and the concept of judicial review and how it was established. The candidate will also provide evidence of examples of judicial decisions that have impacted on the US political system, and the lives of its citizens.

In relation to (5) the candidate should evaluate the nature of the relationship between each of the federal branches of government as a result of the separation of powers. The candidate will study how the separation of powers was established to ensure that each branch of the federal government had a degree of constitutional independence, power and authority, but also a degree of interdependence. How the separation of powers was designed to reflect political liberalism and avoid tyranny of the majority will also be discussed. In addition, the candidate will study how the separation of powers empowered the judiciary to protect fundamental rights in line with the notion of partial agency. The candidate will provide evidence of practical examples of the separation of powers.

In relation to (6) candidates should evaluate the nature of the relationship between federal government and the individual states as a result of the separation of powers. The candidate will study how the separation of powers ensures that the individual states have a degree of constitutional independence, power and authority, but also a degree of interdependence, from Washington. How the separation of powers can manifest as dual-federalism and co-operative federalism will also be discussed. In addition, the candidate will provide evidence of a practical example showing how the relationship between the federal government and the states has been affected by the separation of powers.

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

- 1 The EU Parliament
- 2 The EU Commission
- 3 The Council of Ministers
- 4 The nature of the relationship between each of the institutions
- 5 The nature of the relationship between the European Union and the individual Member States with regard to national sovereignty

In relation to (1) candidates should analyse the powers and functions of the EU Parliament. They should understand the legislative and decision-making process through study of the structure of the European Parliament; its contribution to the legislative process, and its relationship with the Commission and the Council of Ministers. Attention should be given to the fact that, unlike the Commission and the Council of Ministers, members of the Parliament are directly elected; its responsibility primarily being to represent the citizens of the EU.

Higher National Unit specification: support notes (cont)

Unit title: Politics C: The United States and the European Union

In relation to (2) candidates should analyse the powers and functions of the EU Commission. They should understand the executive process through study of the structure of the European Commission; its contribution to the legislative process, and its relationship with the Parliament and the Council of Ministers. In addition, candidates will understand that the primary role of the Commission is to represent the interests of the European Union.

In relation to (3) candidates should analyse the powers and functions of the Council of Ministers. They should understand its decision-making role concerning the legislative process, constitutional issues and the formulation and agreement of treaties. In addition, candidates should understand its relationship with the Parliament and the Commission. Attention should be given to the fact that its members primarily represent the interests of their own governments and people.

In relation to (4) the candidate should evaluate the nature of the relationship between each of the institutions. The candidate should understand the part played, and the relative power held, by each institution in the legislative process and also in issues of EU governance. The complexities surrounding the various allegiances held within, and between, the three institutions should also be examined.

In relation to (5) candidates should evaluate the nature of the relationship between the European Union and the individual Member States with regard to national sovereignty. They should analyse the effect that important EU initiatives have had on the autonomy of the individual states; the different ways in which member states have reacted to these initiatives, and the resultant relationships that have developed as a consequence, between the EU and its members. In addition, and in relation to national sovereignty, perceptions of the EU held by UK citizens, political parties and governments should be examined. Initiatives and issues to be examined could include: the single currency; the European Constitution/Lisbon Treaty; enlargement and Scotland's current/potential relationship with the EU.

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 US and EU political developments.

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.

Higher National Unit specification: support notes (cont)

Unit title: Politics C: The United States and the European Union

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 8 in the presentation.

Centres should make sure they can authenticate a candidate's work for 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.

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** 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.

Higher National Unit specification: support notes (cont)

Unit title: Politics C: The United States and the European Union

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 or on one of the concepts, 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. This may have been developed within Politics B Unit, if that was studied previously. The development can continue in this Unit. The Assessment for Outcome 2 could be a written essay that 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: the separation of powers in relation to the United State's constitutional position, or national sovereignty in relation to the relationship between the European Union and its member states, 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 choice).

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.

Higher National Unit specification: support notes (cont)

Unit title: Politics C: The United States and the European Union

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. 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 C 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 C can also contribute to learners becoming **Responsible Citizens** by allowing the opportunity to develop knowledge and understanding of how the citizens of the United States of America and the European Union are governed. Candidates will be encouraged to develop a more positive view of the political systems of these nations, which could play a large part in improving their perceptions of others. Furthermore, informed, ethical views of complex issues can be developed, as can an understanding of different cultures.

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.

Higher National Unit specification: support notes (cont)

Unit title: Politics C: The United States and the European Union

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.

For the open book assessment, 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.

Arrangements would have to be made to ensure that the assessment for Outcome 1 was conducted closed book and under supervision.

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	Clarification of remediation and reassessment statements.	23/10/12

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General information for candidates

Unit title: Politics C: The United States and the European Union

This Unit will introduce you to the US and EU political systems. It is designed to enable you to develop an understanding of the political structures and decision-making processes at Washington and at Strasbourg/Brussels. It is further aimed at providing you with an understanding of the relationships that exist between the various bodies within both of these political systems, and their relationship with member states. In addition, you will consider debates concerning the concepts of separation of powers in relation to the US, and national sovereignty in relation to the EU.

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 90 minutes 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 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 the Unit to develop as a successful learner, a confident individual, a responsible citizen and an effective contributor.