



Higher Politics — draft Course rationale and summary

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Course rationale

Background

All new and revised National Courses reflect Curriculum for Excellence values, purposes and principles. They offer flexibility, provide more time for learning, more focus on skills and applying learning, and scope for personalisation and choice.

In this Course, and its component Units, there will be an emphasis on skills development and the application of those skills. Assessment approaches will be proportionate, fit for purpose and will promote best practice, enabling learners to achieve the highest standards they can.

This Course provides learners with opportunities to continue to acquire and develop the attributes and capabilities of the four capacities as well as skills for learning, skills for life and skills for work.

All Courses provide opportunities for learners to develop breadth, challenge and application, but the focus and balance of the assessment will be appropriate for the subject area.

Relationship between the Course and Curriculum for Excellence values, purposes and principles

The Course builds upon the principles and practices for the social studies curriculum area¹.

Higher Politics will encourage learners to develop important attitudes, including: an open mind and respect for the values, beliefs and cultures of others; an openness to new thinking and ideas; and a sense of responsibility and global citizenship.

Politics contributes to learners' understanding of the society in which they live and work by helping them to develop an understanding of political ideas and political systems in a UK and international context. This sense of political understanding will, in turn, assist them in participating as effective contributors to society and responsible citizens within that society, as well as giving them more individual confidence in their learning and working lives. By studying this Course, learners are enabled to develop the four capacities in many respects.

For example, learners' horizons are extended and their knowledge of political life is expanded by challenging them to look at the world in new ways. Learners become confident by developing a critical awareness of the nature of politics and the relationship between political ideologies, systems and parties.

Learners will become responsible citizens by building up a framework of political knowledge and understanding. They will become effective contributors who, through the knowledge and understanding gained from investigative, creative and critical thinking activities carried out individually and in groups, develop attributes which will be important for their life and work.

Interpreting, evaluating and commenting on political issues will develop thinking skills. Learners will progressively develop skills in literacy and numeracy.

Purpose and aims of the Course

The purpose of this Course is to develop learners' knowledge and understanding of political systems and the rights and responsibilities of citizenship. Its theoretical perspective enables learners to identify, explore and analyse political issues in order to develop their own views and perspectives on political systems and political representation. This purpose will be achieved through successful study of the Course Units which are: *Political Ideologies*, *Political Systems*, and *Political Parties and Elections*.

¹ Social studies principles and practice paper

www.ltscotland.org.uk/learningteachingandassessment/curriculumareas/socialstudies/principlesandpractice/index.asp

The Course will develop investigating, analysing and evaluating skills to help learners to interpret and comment on political issues.

Politics makes a distinctive contribution to the curriculum by its study of the ideological basis of political systems, comparison of political systems and the dominant ideas, and electoral performance of political parties within these systems.

The main aims of Politics are to enable learners to:

- ◆ understand and respect individual rights, duties and citizenship
- ◆ understand political events, issues, ideologies, parties, and electoral performance
- ◆ evaluate the nature of power and democracy as political concepts
- ◆ understand the complexity of political systems through comparative study
- ◆ engage as active and informed members of society and local and global citizens

This Course will help develop informed and active citizens by developing a greater understanding of political ideologies, systems and representation. Learners will develop skills which are transferable to other areas of study and which they will use in everyday life.

Information about typical learners who might do the Course

This Course is appropriate for a wide range of learners, from those who wish to achieve a greater understanding of politics and their place in contemporary society to learners who wish to progress to more specialised training or higher education or employment.

Entry to this Course is at the discretion of the centre. However, it may be beneficial for learners to have the skills and knowledge required by one or more of the following:

- ◆ another social subject
- ◆ equivalent qualifications

All Courses in this suite will take account of the needs of all learners and provide sufficient flexibility to enable learners to achieve in different ways and at a different pace.

Through the successful completion of this Course, important skills for learning, life and work are developed. These skills include: researching and investigating political issues; synthesising information from a wide range of sources to produce detailed and reasoned conclusions; explaining and evaluating a range of political

successful learner, confident individual, responsible citizen, effective contributor

ideologies; comparing, contrasting and evaluating political systems; and interpreting and evaluating electoral data.

Politics Units and Courses are offered at SCQF level 6. Vertical and lateral progression is possible through other qualifications in the social studies suite of Courses.

Higher Politics provides an access qualification for study in further and higher education and for entry into a diverse range of occupations and careers.

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Course summary

Course title: Higher Politics

SCQF level 6 (24 SCQF credit points)

Course outline

Mandatory Units

Political Ideologies (Higher)	(6 SCQF credit points)
Political Systems (Higher)	(6 SCQF credit points)
Political Parties and Elections (Higher)	(6 SCQF credit points)

Course assessment

(6 SCQF credit points)

This Course includes six SCQF credit points for 40 additional programmed hours to allow preparation for Course assessment. The Course assessment covers the added value of the Course. Further information on the Course assessment is provided in the Assessment section.

Course structure and conditions of award

This Course develops a range of cognitive skills. It encourages active learning in the process of acquiring and applying relevant knowledge. Learners will develop investigating, analysing and evaluating skills in order to explain and understand the modern world.

The Politics Course has three mandatory Units.

By undertaking this Course, learners will develop a wide range of important and transferable skills, including researching and investigating political issues; synthesising information from a wide range of sources to produce detailed and reasoned conclusions; explaining and evaluating a range of political ideologies; comparing, contrasting and evaluating political systems; and interpreting and evaluating electoral data.

The skills listed above will be developed and applied over a range of contexts in the following Units. Each Unit also offers opportunities for learners to focus on particular skills.

Units are statements of standards for assessment and not programmes of learning and teaching. They can be delivered in a variety of ways.

Political Ideologies (Higher)

In this Unit, the focus will be on drawing balanced conclusions on the nature of power and democracy within a political system. This will be achieved through the study of a range of political ideologies from across the political spectrum. Learners will develop knowledge and understanding of a range of political ideologies such as communism, socialism, liberalism, conservatism, nationalism and fascism.

Political Systems (Higher)

This Unit will focus on the skills of comparing and contrasting the political processes of different political systems. In this Unit, learners will develop knowledge and understanding of the UK constitution and either the Scottish, the USA or the European Union constitution; the role of Parliament and the Executive; and how political organisations can impact on the political process.

Political Parties and Elections (Higher)

This Unit will focus on the use of techniques to evaluate contemporary party political issues. Learners will interpret and evaluate electoral data relevant to the major UK political parties, voting patterns and opinion poll evidence. In this Unit, learners will develop knowledge and understanding of the dominant ideas of political parties within the UK and their electoral performance over time.

To gain the award of the Course, the learner must pass all the Units as well as the Course assessment. The required Units are shown in the Course outline section. Course assessment will provide the basis for grading attainment in the Course award.

Assessment

Information about assessment standards for the Course will be included in the *Course Assessment Specification* which will provide full details including advice on how a learner's overall attainment for the Course will be determined.

Unit assessment

All Units are internally assessed against the requirements shown in Unit specifications.

They will be assessed pass/fail within centres.

SQA will provide rigorous external quality assurance, including external verification, to ensure assessment judgements are consistent and meet national standards.

Exemplification of possible assessment approaches for these Units will be provided in the *National Assessment Resource*.

Course assessment

Courses from National 4 to Advanced Higher include assessment of [added value](#)². At National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher, the added value will be assessed in the Course assessment. The added value for the Course must address the key purposes and aims of the Course as defined in the Course Rationale. It will do this by addressing one or more of breadth, challenge and application.

In the Higher Politics Course, added value will focus on:

- ◆ breadth
- ◆ challenge
- ◆ application

Learners will draw on, extend and apply the knowledge and skills they have learned during the Course. This will be assessed by a combination of a [question paper](#)³ and a [project](#)⁴. The question paper will require demonstration of a breadth of knowledge, understanding and skills accumulated from across the Course. The project will require learners to extend and apply their knowledge and skills and will be sufficiently open and flexible to allow for personalisation and choice.

² Definitions can be found here: www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/45528.html

³ See link above for definition.

⁴ See link above for definition.