

# Further information on Higher Politics Course Assessment (November 2013)

## Key messages

SQA is currently developing Course and Unit assessments. This document outlines our progress in Course Assessment for the Higher Course in Politics.

The new Politics Higher Course will maintain the standard of the current qualification at Higher and will continue to be benchmarked against SCQF level 6 as well as ensuring that the level of demand for candidates is consistent with other Higher qualifications.

Course assessment will consist of two components: a question paper and an assignment. Course assessment will be out of 90 marks. Both components will be externally assessed. The question paper is worth 60 marks and the assignment is worth 30 marks.

The new Politics Higher Course combines popular and relevant contexts from the current Course, as well as introducing updated content and new contexts to ensure the continuing relevance of the subject. The course will provide opportunities to develop breadth and depth of knowledge and understanding, and the application of skills, through the study of a range of political contexts. Personalisation and choice will be increased through a wider range of contexts for study, as well as the opportunity for candidates to choose an issue for research in the assignment.

Across the course assessment, both skills and knowledge and understanding will have equal importance. Skills will be developed within a body of political knowledge and understanding in contexts relating to political theory, political systems and political parties and elections. Each component will assess both skills and knowledge and understanding, although the question paper will have a greater emphasis on knowledge and understanding while the assignment will have a greater emphasis on the application of skills.

The question paper will assess the skills and sample knowledge and understanding from the Course Specification and the Course Assessment Specification. It will draw upon styles of questions familiar in Politics.

In the assignment candidates will undertake research in the context of a Political issue, they have an open choice of issue to allow for personalisation and choice.

## Points of stability and points of change between current Higher and new Higher

	Points of Stability	Points of Change
Skills	Applying information handling skills of interpreting and analysing electoral data and using detailed/complex sources. Comparative approach to political systems retained.	Skills of drawing conclusions will be assessed in the assignment. Emphasis on skills of comparing and reaching conclusions.
Use of sources	Use of a range of written, numerical and graphical sources of information.	In the assignment, candidates will research an issue and collect sources.

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Knowledge and understanding	Familiar topics and issues will be retained across all Units and in all three sections of the question paper. Retention of political theory and political systems as areas of study.	Opportunity to include a range of new contexts including a wider choice of political ideologies and political systems to study. Wider focus on political parties and elections.
Question stems / command words	Use of 'Discuss', 'To what extent' and 'Compare' as command words.	Greater clarity and consistency in use of command words and in marking instructions; introduction of command words 'Analyse' and 'Evaluate'.
Unit Assessment	3 Units.	Increased flexibility in approaches to gathering evidence.
Course Assessment	Question paper retained; choice of extended response questions.	Question Paper (135 minutes) and Assignment (Production of evidence stage in up to 90 minutes).
Types of Question	Extended responses and source based questions; there will continue to be a 20 mark extended response.	Single question paper; introduction of 12 mark extended response questions and 8 mark source-based questions.
Marking instructions	Will continue to be available.	Extended advice and guidance for centres in how marks are allocated to a range of responses. Extended marking principles.
Level of demand	Benchmarked against SCQF level 6 and current Higher.	Improved alignment with other subjects at Higher.
Marks	80 marks in current Higher across 2 papers.	90 marks: 60 from question paper, 30 from assignment.

**Higher specimen question paper (publication by 28 February 2014)**

The question paper will assess the skills and sample knowledge and understanding from the Course Specification and the Course assessment Specification.

	<b>Higher</b>
<b>Total marks</b>	60
<b>Time</b>	Two hours 15 minutes
<b>Sections</b>	3 sections
<b>Mark ranges for each question in the SQP</b>	8 - 20
<b>Number of questions</b>	1 or 2 per section, 5 overall
<b>Use of sources</b>	Use up to 3 detailed/complex sources
<b>Question paper format/optionality/choice</b>	In each section there will be a choice of extended response questions. No choice of information-handling questions — requirement to apply skills to less familiar context.
<b>Mandatory content</b>	Questions drawn from Political Theory, Political Systems

	and Political Parties and Elections.
<b>Depth of treatment of mandatory content</b>	Extended responses requiring knowledge and understanding and analysis/evaluation.
<b>Question stems/command words</b>	<p>'Statement' or given view. Discuss.                      To what extent...                      Explain ...                      Compare ...                      Evaluate ...                      Analyse ...</p>

The purpose of this question paper is to allow candidates to demonstrate the application of skills and breadth of knowledge and understanding by responding to questions sampling from the mandatory information on Course coverage.

This question paper will give learners an opportunity to demonstrate the following skills:

- ◆ comparing and contrasting, making generalisations where appropriate
- ◆ interpreting, evaluating and synthesising a wide range of electoral data
- ◆ explaining, analysing and evaluating complex political issues, using knowledge and understanding that is factual, theoretical and conceptual, and adopting a comparative approach where appropriate

This question paper will have three Sections. Each section will be made up of questions requiring candidates to draw on the knowledge and understanding and apply skills.

The knowledge and understanding will be drawn from the *Politics (Higher) Course Specification* and the Further Mandatory Information on Course coverage in the *Politics (Higher) Course Assessment Specification*.

This question paper will be set and marked by SQA, and conducted in centres under conditions specified for external examinations by SQA. The question paper is worth 60 marks. The duration of the question paper will be two hours 15 minutes. It will be divided into three sections, each of 20 marks:

- Section 1 – Political Theory
- Section 2 – Political Systems
- Section 3 – Political Parties and Elections

Candidates will answer one extended response question (worth 20 marks) assessing knowledge and understanding and higher order skills of analysis and evaluation. This question may be set in either Section 1 or 2 of the paper and candidates will have a choice of one question to answer from two.

Candidates will answer two smaller extended response questions (worth 12 marks each) assessing knowledge and understanding and higher order skills of analysis or evaluation. These questions may be set in any section of the paper and candidates will have a choice of one question to answer

from two in each section.

Candidates will answer two source based, information handling skills questions (worth 8 marks each) assessing the skills of comparing and contrasting (Section 1 or 2) and interpreting, synthesising and evaluating electoral data (Section 3). Candidates will have no choice of question to answer. These questions will consist of between two and three sources of information at an appropriate level of detail and complexity for this SCQF level. Sources may be written, numerical, graphical or pictorial.

For the question paper, there will be a separate question paper and answer booklet.

(For sample questions from the current draft of the Specimen Question paper, please see Appendix 1)

### **Higher Assignment (publication by 31 March 2014)**

An assignment is a new method of assessment for this subject.

The assignment will allow candidates to undertake research and apply skills of drawing conclusions in the context of a political issue. Candidates have an open choice of issue to allow for personalisation and choice.

At Higher, the assignment will give candidates an opportunity to demonstrate the following higher-order cognitive skills, knowledge and understanding:

- ◆ identify a political issue that invites discussion and debate
- ◆ research a political issue using a range of sources of information
- ◆ refer to political sources
- ◆ analyse and synthesise information in a structured manner
- ◆ draw a detailed and reasoned conclusion, showing an awareness of different points of view
- ◆ show detailed factual and theoretical knowledge and understanding of a political issue
- ◆ communicate information

At Higher, the assignment will have 30 marks (33% of the total mark). The assignment will have a greater emphasis on the assessment of skills than the question paper. Up to 20 marks will be awarded for the assessment of skills; up to 10 marks will be awarded for the assessment of knowledge and understanding of the issue.

The assignment is in two stages: a research stage and a production of evidence stage. The production of evidence stage will be conducted under a high level of supervision, within one hour 30 minutes, and submitted to SQA for external marking. SQA will provide two documents: Assignment: General information and Assignment: Assessment task. These will be available online and will not require regular updating. Candidates may use only specified resources during the production of evidence stage.

The nature of the specified resources should show evidence of primary or secondary research carried out by the candidate and may include, for example: statistical, graphical or numerical data; survey results; interview questions and/or answers; views of political commentators; questionnaire and/or survey results; list of internet search engine results; newspaper article or extracts; notes taken from a visit or talk; notes taken from a written or audio visual source. Candidates may be advised by teachers/ lecturers as to resources that would be appropriate for the assignment at this SCQF level.

**Criteria used to allocate marks**

- ◆ Demonstrating factual and theoretical knowledge and understanding of the issue, showing an awareness of different points of view
- ◆ Analysing and synthesising information in a structured manner
- ◆ Referring to political sources
- ◆ Communicating information
- ◆ Drawing detailed and reasoned conclusions about the issue

(For further information from the current draft of the Assignment, please see Appendix 2)

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# Appendix 1

The following examples show *some* of the questions in each section of the current draft of the Specimen Question Paper.

## POLITICAL THEORY

Legitimacy is crucial to an understanding of the distinction between Power and Authority.

Discuss with reference to the ideas of Lukes and Weber.

20 marks

‘The key features of political ideologies are very different.’

To what extent is this statement correct; in your answer you should refer to **two** political ideologies?

You must make reference to the ideas of relevant theorists.

20 marks

**POLITICAL SYSTEMS**

Study Sources A and B below and opposite then answer the question that follows.

**SOURCE A**

**US Congressional Committees**

Membership of US Committees, especially Senate committees, has always had high status. Congressional committees are often referred to as 'little legislatures' because of the influence they have. In a nation which prides itself on the separation of powers, Congressional Committees also provide an invaluable service to the nation by investigating the Executive's work. Congressional committees have significant budgets to carry out detailed investigations and can rely on a large staff of investigators.

In recent times US committees have become very politically divided, with members taking positions on bills according to party lines. Although this 'partisanship' has impacted on members' willingness to scrutinise government as Republican and Democrat members adopt opposite positions, Congressional committees are often controlled by the opponents to the President. For example during the 1990s Congressional committees controlled by the Republicans carried out a number of investigations into the Democratic President, Bill Clinton, over alleged scandals in office.

Senate Committee meetings, especially, can often be lively and combative. UK MP George Galloway famously made a flamboyant appearance at the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs committee in 2005.

There have been calls to improve the workings of committees. Many in the USA feel that the influence of professional lobbyists should be reduced. Information could be shared much better with the public so voters can be empowered to make more informed decisions about whether to keep or replace the elected officials who are acting as their representatives. However, Congressional committees do have some significant powers such as the ability to compel witnesses to attend hearings and to acquire information under oath. Indeed failure to disclose information or to lie under oath has resulted in imprisonment in the past.

SOURCE B

**Parliamentary Committees in the United Kingdom**

House of Commons committees hold inquiries to produce reports on a range of matters, from the conduct of Government to specialist subject areas. Membership of parliamentary committees hasn't always been as valued as it could be. But in recent years their profile has risen following investigations and public hearings into the conduct of British banks and phone hacking allegations against a number of newspapers. However, critics have long argued that parliamentary committees are limited by a lack of staff and resources to carry out detailed scrutiny of the executive branch.

While MPs can belong to committees in the Commons and peers belong to committees in the Lords, there are also some joint committees where members from the two Houses of Parliament work together. Despite being, in theory, independent from the government the balance on House of Commons committees reflects party support in the House. As a result, committees usually have a majority controlled by the governing party. For a long time party whips had too much power and committees were accused of editing reports critical of the government as a result of the influence of government whips. Even now, sometimes hearings can be dull and MPs are not always able to get key information from witnesses. Witnesses are able to talk about irrelevant issues knowing that in a few minutes they will be free to leave.

Many people feel that parliamentary committees could be improved in order to make them more effective. The practice of giving each committee member five or 10 minutes to question witnesses can be counter-productive. While the vast majority of those called to attend committees do so, Parliament does not have any real effective power to fine or imprison people who refuse to attend or who mislead a committee.

**Using only Sources A and B**

**Compare** the effectiveness of US Congressional committees and UK Parliamentary committees in scrutinising the actions of government.

In your answer you must make **three** points of comparison.

**8 marks**

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## **POLITICAL SYSTEMS**

Compare the role of the Executive in making policy in **two** political systems.

Refer to **at least two** aspects of policy making in each system.

**12 marks**

Compare the role of the Judiciary in protecting rights in **two** political systems.

Refer to **at least two** aspects of protecting rights in each system.

**12 marks**

## **POLITICAL PARTIES AND ELECTIONS**

**Evaluate** the success of media strategies used by political parties during election campaigns.

Refer to **at least two** media strategies.

**12 marks**

**Evaluate** the impact of the dominant ideas of a political party on its electoral performance.

Refer to **at least two** dominant ideas of a political party.

**12 marks**

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**January 2014**

## General Marking Principles for Politics Higher

The following general marking principles must be applied when marking all candidate responses to questions in this Paper. These principles must be read in conjunction with the detailed Marking Instructions for each question. The marking schemes are written to assist in determining the 'minimal acceptable answer' rather than listing every possible correct and incorrect answer.

- ◆ Marks for each candidate response must **always** be assigned in line with these general marking principles and the specific Marking Instructions for the relevant question. If a specific candidate response does not seem to be covered by either the principles or detailed Marking Instructions, and you are uncertain how to assess it, you must seek guidance from your Team Leader/Principal Assessor. Marking should always be positive, ie marks should be awarded for what is correct and not deducted for errors or omissions.
- ◆ Where the candidate violates the rubric of the paper and answers two parts in one section, both responses should be marked and the better mark recorded.
- ◆ For credit to be given, points must relate to the question asked. Where candidates give points of knowledge without specifying the context, these should be rewarded unless it is clear that they do not refer to the context of the question.

### Marking Principles for each question type

For each of the question types the following provides an overview of marking principles and an example of their application for each question type.

The types of questions that may be used in this paper are:

- ◆ 'Statement' or given view. Discuss. [20 mark extended response]
- ◆ To what extent... [20 mark extended response]
- ◆ Explain ... [12 mark extended response]
- ◆ Analyse ... [12 mark extended response]
- ◆ Evaluate ... [12 mark extended response]
- ◆ Compare ... [12 mark extended response]
- ◆ To what extent ... [information handling question – 8 marks]
- ◆ Compare ... [information handling question – 8 marks]

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### Extended response questions that assess knowledge, understanding and analysis and/or evaluation (12 or 20 marks)

For knowledge/understanding marks to be awarded, points must be:

- ◆ relevant to the point in the CAS to which the question relates
- ◆ developed (by providing additional detail, exemplification, reasons or evidence)
- ◆ used to respond to the demands of the question (ie explain, analyse, etc)

For 12-mark responses, up to 8 marks will be awarded for knowledge and understanding (description, explanation and exemplification) and 4 marks for demonstration of higher order skills of analysis **or** evaluation.

- ◆ Questions which use the command 'analyse' will involve the identification of parts of an issue, the relationship between these parts and their relationships with the whole; to draw out and relate implications
- ◆ Questions which use the command 'compare' will involve the identification of differences and/or similarities
- ◆ Questions which use the command 'evaluate' will involve the making of a judgement based on criteria; determining the value of something
- ◆ Questions which use the command 'explain' will involve the relating of cause and effect and/or making relationships clear

For 20-mark responses, up to 8 marks will be awarded for knowledge and understanding (description, explanation and exemplification) and 12 marks for demonstration of higher order skills of analysis **and** evaluation **and** structured argument.

- ◆ Questions which use the format of 'Statement' and Discuss will require the candidate to communicate ideas and information on the view presented in the statement. Candidates will be credited for analysing and evaluating different views of the statement/viewpoint
- ◆ Questions which use the format of 'To what extent ...' will be expected to analyse the issue in the question and come to a conclusion or conclusions which involve an evaluative judgement which is likely to be quantitative in nature

Marking must be consistent. Never make a hasty judgement on a response based on length, quality of hand writing or a confused start.

Use the full range of marks up to 12 or 20 marks.

The specific marking instructions describe clearly the qualities of expected responses. Candidate responses which use other relevant contexts should be credited.

### Source-based questions that assess information handling skills (8 marks)

- ◆ Credit highly candidates who synthesise information within and between sources.
- ◆ For full marks candidates must refer to all sources in their answer.

The Specimen Question Paper will also include detailed marking instructions showing how general marking principles will be applied to each specific question and examples of appropriate content.

# Appendix 2

The following information is taken from the current draft of the Assignment.

## General Marking Principles for Higher Politics: Assignment

*This information is provided to help you understand the general principles you must apply when marking candidate responses in this assignment. These principles are reflected in the specific marking instructions that will be used to mark the assignment.*

- a) Marks for each candidate response must always be assigned in line with these general marking principles and the specific marking instructions.
- b) If a specific candidate response does not seem to be covered by either these principles or specific marking instructions, or where they have researched an area in which you are unable to verify the knowledge which they have presented, and you are uncertain how to assess it, you must seek guidance from your Assessment Leader/Principal Assessor.
- c) Marking should always be positive, ie marks should be awarded for what is correct and not deducted for errors or omissions.

Candidates may demonstrate a range of approaches to how they structure their assignment evidence in the production of evidence stage. At Higher level candidates are required to demonstrate both breadth and depth in their assignment evidence.

Candidates may demonstrate their skills, knowledge and understanding in a variety of ways and at different points in their assignment evidence. Markers should credit relevant and appropriate skills, knowledge and understanding wherever it is demonstrated.

In presenting their findings, candidates should show the following skills, knowledge and understanding:

- A. Demonstrating factual and theoretical knowledge and understanding of the issue, showing an awareness of different points of view**  
Candidates can be credited in a number of ways.
- B. Analysing and synthesising information in a structured manner**  
Candidates can be credited in a number of ways.
- C. Referring to political sources**  
Candidates can be credited in a number of ways. Candidates must make reference to the Research Evidence brought into the production of evidence stage; otherwise a maximum of 0 marks may be awarded for this criterion.
- D. Communicating information**  
Candidates can be credited in a number of ways.
- E. Drawing detailed and reasoned conclusions about the issue**  
Candidates can be credited in a number of ways.

**Specified resources to be taken into assessment**

Candidates may take evidence collected during the research phase into the production of evidence stage, using the Politics Resource Sheet. The Politics Resource Sheet must be submitted with the evidence produced during the final production of evidence stage. The Politics Resource Sheet will be a single-side of A4 paper.

The Politics Resource Sheet taken into the production of evidence stage should show evidence of the research carried out by the candidate and may include, for example: research data; notes taken from sources; details of internet search results; newspaper articles or extracts; extracts from books; notes taken from a visit or talk; and notes taken from a written or audio visual source etc. Candidates can receive guidance from their assessor on the type of resources which would be appropriate for the assignment at this SCQF level.

While no marks are awarded for the Politics Resource Sheet taken into the assessment, it may enable clarification of points which the candidate has made in the presentation of their evidence, and may allow markers to gain an insight into what the candidate intended.

Further information will be provided on the allocation of marks for the Higher Politics: Assignment.
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