



Higher National Unit specification

General information for centres

Unit title: Politics B: The United Kingdom and Scotland

Unit code:

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.

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.

Credit points and level: 2 HN credit(s) 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.*

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 Intermediate and Higher level, or other similar qualifications, is desirable but not essential. Candidates should however normally have achieved HN Unit Politics A: *An Introduction to Political Theories of the State*

Ultimately, entry is at the discretion of the centre.

Core Skills: There are opportunities to develop the Core Skill(s) of Communication at SCQF level 6 in this Unit, and IT at SCQF level 5 in this Unit, although there is no automatic certification of Core Skills or Core Skills components.

Context for delivery: This Unit can be taught and assessed as a stand alone Unit. 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. This Unit is included in the framework of HNC/D Social Sciences.

General information for centres (cont)

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:

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

Please refer to *Knowledge and/or Skills for the Unit* and *Evidence Requirements for the Unit* after the Outcomes.

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 for Outcome 1 by showing that they can:

Apply knowledge and understanding to the UK system of government; the nature of the UK constitution and decision-making processes; the forces that impact on the constitution and decision-making processes; the roles and functions of the UK Parliament and Executive; parties and pressure groups, and the first-past-the-post electoral system.

Response to the task set should include:

- 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

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

Assessment Guidelines

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.

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. Regardless of the assessment method chosen, the candidate must submit a bibliography presented in a standard referencing format such as Harvard or APA.

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

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 for Outcome 2 by showing that they can:

Apply knowledge and understanding to the nature of the Scottish devolved system of governance and decision-making processes, the powers and functions of the Scottish Parliament and Executive, and the additional member electoral system. Candidates will also study concepts which relate to Scotland's constitutional position within the United Kingdom.

Response to the task set should include:

- 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

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

Assessment Guidelines

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

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

Administrative Information

Unit code:

Unit title: Politics B: The United Kingdom and Scotland

Superclass category:

Original date of publication:

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History of changes:

Version	Description of change	Date

Source: SQA

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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 Award. The Unit is designed to further develop concepts learned in HN Unit Politics A: *Political Theories of the State and the Individual* 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:

1. The UK Constitution
2. The UK Executive
3. The UK Parliament
4. The UK party political system
5. The UK parliamentary electoral system
6. 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.

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 First-Past-the-Post 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:

1. The process of establishing devolution in Scotland
2. The Scottish Parliament
3. The Scottish Executive
4. The Scottish parliamentary electoral system
5. 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 utilized 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.

Guidance on the delivery and assessment of this Unit

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

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. Authenticating a candidate's work is essential. It would be helpful to collect notes or PPT presentation materials from a 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.

Reassessment for Outcome 1 should 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 approximately 100 words or less. Otherwise, a different assessment would be required to be completed in its entirety.

In oral assessment 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 will help to reduce the need for reassessment. However, where more work is required to meet the evidence requirements (e.g. where a presentation falls short of the required time) another presentation of the same time as the original would be required.

Reassessment 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.

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 will help to reduce the need for reassessment. However, where more work is required to meet the evidence requirements (e.g. where a presentation falls short of the required time) another presentation of the same time as the original would be required.

Opportunities for developing Core Skills

The delivery and assessment of this Unit may contribute towards the development of Core Skills of Communication and IT. 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 Higher level if the assessment takes the form of an essay 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.

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 the United Kingdom and Scottish political systems, without being formally assessed for certification of Core Skill. The topic of analyzing and evaluating the concepts: unionism, devolution and separatism in relation to Scotland's constitutional position is complex, so should easily fit with SCQF level 6.

It is important to develop essay-writing skills for candidates' future progression. In doing this candidates should also be encouraged to use an appropriate referencing method, such as Harvard or APA, for any formative or summative essays. Referencing, citation and bibliography skills are best developed using the vehicle of formative essay writing.

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 choice).

The Core Skill of Information Technology at SCQF level 5 the skill is: use ICT independently, effectively, and responsibly to access information within a range of 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.

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Open learning

The Unit is ideally suited to delivery by open or distance learning. Written responses in the form of an essay and a report 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. For further information on Open and Distance Learning, please refer to the SQA publication, *Assessment and Quality Assurance of Open and Distance Learning* (SQA, 2000)

Disabled candidates and/or those with additional support needs

This Unit specification is intended to ensure that there are no artificial barriers to learning or assessment. Additional support needs of individual candidates should be taken into account when planning learning experiences, selecting assessment instruments or considering special alternative Outcomes for Units. For information on these, please refer to the SQA document *Guidance on Alternative Assessment Arrangements for Candidates with Disabilities and/or Additional Support Needs*.

Further advice can be found on our website www.sqa.org.uk/assessmentarrangements

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 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.

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