



## Higher National Unit specification

### General information for centres

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

**Unit code:**

**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.

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.

**Credit points and level:** 2 HN credits at SCQF level 8: (8 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.*

### 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.

In addition, candidates should normally have achieved 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.

**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 8

## **Higher National Unit specification: statement of standards**

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

### **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 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 for Outcome 1 by showing that they can:

Apply analytical and evaluative skills to an understanding of the contents and nature of the US Constitution; the powers and functions of the Presidency; Congress and Supreme Court; restraints on/relations between the three federal branches of government; the relations between Federal and State governments, and the effect that the separation of powers has had on the US system of governance.

Response to the task set should include:

- Analysis of the contents and nature of the US Constitution
- Analysis of the powers and functions of the US Executive, Legislature and Judiciary

- Evaluation of the nature of the relationship between each of the federal branches of government as a result of the separation of powers
- Evaluation of the nature of the relationship between Federal Government and the individual States as a result of the separation of powers

**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. The sample for assessment should be changed on each assessment occasion. 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 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 Outcome 2 by showing that they can:

Apply knowledge and skills to the powers and functions of the EU Parliament, Commission and Council of Ministers; the nature of the relationship between each, and the nature of the relationship between the EU and the individual Member States with regard to national sovereignty.

Response to the task set should include:

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

**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 8 in each type of task.

## **Administrative Information**

**Unit code:**

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

**Superclass category:**

**Original date of publication:**

**Version:01**

**History of changes:**

<b>Version</b>	<b>Description of change</b>	<b>Date</b>

**Source:** SQA

© Scottish Qualifications Authority [year]

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

SQA acknowledges the valuable contribution that Scotland's colleges have made to the development of Higher National qualifications.

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

## 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 Award. The Unit is designed to further develop concepts learned in HN Units Politics A: *Political Theories of the State and the Individual* 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 HNC/D Social Sciences Group Awards.

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.

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.

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**

An exemplar instrument of assessment and marking guidelines has been produced to indicate the national standard of achievement required at SCQF level 8.

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 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.

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 United States and European Union political systems, without being formally assessed for certification of Core Skill. The topic of analyzing and evaluating 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, 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: 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).

**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.

## **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](http://www.sqa.org.uk/assessmentarrangements)

## 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.

DRAFT