

Higher National Unit specification

General information for centres

Unit title: Journalism: Public Affairs

Unit code: F1RM 34

Unit purpose: This Unit is designed to enable the candidate to develop and apply a knowledge of local, national and international government organisations and issues. This Unit will develop the candidate's ability to explain developments in political contexts which affect local, national (Scotland and the UK) and international government.

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

- 1 Explain the role of local government in Scotland and how it relates to local issues.
- 2 Explain the role of Scottish and UK national governments and how they relate to national issues.
- 3 Explain the role of international government and how it relates to international issues.

Credit points and level: 2 HN credits 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: Access to this Unit is at the discretion of the Centre. However, in view of the writing demands of this Unit, candidates would normally be expected to have competence in communication skills at SCQF level 6 or equivalent. This could be demonstrated by achievement of one of the following:

- ◆ Higher English (C115 12) or its component Units
- ◆ Communication 4 (EE3T 12) and Literature 1 (E9X2 12)
- ◆ Communication (D01B 12)
- ◆ Relevant work experience

Core Skills: There are opportunities to develop the Core Skill of Communication in this Unit, although there is no automatic certification of Core Skills or Core Skills components. Further detail is provided in the Support Notes.

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. This Unit is mandatory within HNC/HND Practical Journalism.

Assessment: The assessment for each Outcome will be open-book and will be conducted under controlled and supervised conditions.

Higher National Unit specification: statement of standards

Unit title: Journalism: Public Affairs

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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

Explain the structure and role of local government in Scotland and how it relates to local issues

Knowledge and/or Skills

- ◆ Structure of local government in Scotland
- ◆ Major functions of local government in Scotland
- ◆ Major areas of local government responsibilities in Scotland
- ◆ Operation of local government in Scotland
- ◆ Current journalistic practice regarding access to official channels of communicating with local government in Scotland

Evidence Requirements

This will be a two-part assessment.

The candidate will need to provide evidence to demonstrate his/her Knowledge and/or Skills by showing that he/she can:

- ◆ In part one, explain the structure of local government in Scotland, its major functions, major areas of responsibility and operation of local government. Current journalistic practice regarding access to official channels of communicating with local government in Scotland should also be explained.
- ◆ In part two, the candidate must show the relationship between the role of local government and local issues.

The candidate must be assessed on **two** different subject areas, examples of which can be found under Assessment Guidelines. The candidate must not know in advance the items on which he/she will be assessed and different items must be sampled on each assessment occasion.

The candidate's response should be a minimum of 1,500 words. The assessment should be conducted under open-book, controlled and supervised conditions within a period of two hours.

Higher National Unit specification: statement of standards (cont)

Unit title: Journalism: Public Affairs

Assessment Guidelines

This Outcome may be assessed by extended response or by a set of restricted response questions.

For Outcome 1, the following subject areas should be addressed:

- ◆ Local government finance arrangements (rates, council tax), privatisation, contracting out, political parties in local government, local elections and the electoral system, non-electoral forms of public participation and non-elected local governance, value for money and the rise of the performance culture in Scottish local government.

Outcome 2

Explain the role of Scottish and UK national governments and how they relate to national issues

Knowledge and/or Skills

- ◆ Structure of Scottish and UK national governments
- ◆ Major functions of Scottish and UK national governments
- ◆ Major areas of Scottish and UK national governments' responsibilities
- ◆ Operation of Scottish and UK national governments
- ◆ Current journalistic practice regarding access to official channels of communicating with Scottish and UK national governments.

Evidence Requirements

This will be a two-part assessment.

The candidate will need to provide evidence to demonstrate his/her Knowledge and/or Skills by showing that he/she can:

- ◆ In part one, explain the structure, major functions, major areas of responsibility and operation of the Scottish and UK national governments. Current journalistic practice regarding access to official channels of communicating with Scottish and UK national governments should also be explained.
- ◆ In part two, the candidate must show the relationship between the role of national governments and national issues.

The candidate must be assessed on **two** different subject areas, examples of which can be found under Assessment Guidelines. The candidate must not know in advance the items on which he/she will be assessed and different items must be sampled on each assessment occasion.

The candidate's response should be a minimum of 1,500 words. The assessment should be conducted under open-book, controlled and supervised conditions within a period of two hours.

Higher National Unit specification: statement of standards (cont)

Unit title: Journalism: Public Affairs

Assessment Guidelines

This Outcome may be assessed by extended response or by a set of restricted response questions.

For Outcome 2, the following subject areas should be addressed:

- ◆ Key political ideologies (union, independence, federation), devolved and retained powers, the political parties at Holyrood and Westminster, minority government in Scotland, coalition government in Scotland, the Scottish system of proportional representation, consequences of the mixed electoral approach for the Scottish parliamentary system, recent political developments in the Scottish Parliament and at Westminster, consequences of devolution for the Westminster system of government, the West Lothian question, developments in English nationalism.

Outcome 3

Explain the role of international government and how it relates to international issues

Knowledge and/or Skills

- ◆ Structure of international government
- ◆ Major functions of international government
- ◆ Major areas of international government responsibilities
- ◆ Operation of international government
- ◆ Current journalistic practice regarding access to official channels of communicating with international government

Evidence Requirements

This will be a two-part assessment.

The candidate will need to provide evidence to demonstrate his/her Knowledge and/or Skills by showing that he/she can:

- ◆ In part one, explain the structure, major functions, major areas of responsibility and operation of international government. Current journalistic practice regarding access to official channels of communicating with international government should also be explained.
- ◆ In part two, the candidate must show the relationship between the role of international government and international issues. The candidate must be assessed on **two** different subject areas, examples of which can be found under Assessment Guidelines. The candidate must not know in advance the items on which he/she will be assessed and different items must be sampled on each assessment occasion.

The candidate's response should be a minimum of 1,500 words. The assessment should be conducted under open-book, controlled and supervised conditions within a period of two hours.

Higher National Unit specification: statement of standards (cont)

Unit title: Journalism: Public Affairs

Assessment Guidelines

This Outcome may be assessed by extended response or by a set of restricted response questions.

For Outcome 3, the following subject areas should be addressed:

- ◆ Sovereignty, subsidiarity, globalization, the global environment, deregulation, debt relief, the spread of democracy and human rights, the role of peace keeping forces, the threat of nuclear proliferation, global terrorism.

Administrative Information

Unit code: FIRM 34
Unit title: Journalism: Public Affairs
Superclass category: EA
Original date of publication: June 2007
Version: 02

History of changes:

Version	Description of change	Date
02	Assessment time increased from 90 minutes to 120 minutes for all Outcomes.	10/05/10

Source: SQA

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Higher National Unit specification: support notes

Unit title: Journalism: Public Affairs

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

The purpose of this Unit is to provide the candidate with sufficient knowledge of local, national and international government and issues to enable the accurate reporting of public policy and public administration at local, national and international levels of government.

Outcome 1

This Outcome introduces the candidate to the procedures and personnel involved in the development of public policy and in the implementation of public administration at the level of local government in Scotland. The delivery of the content should take into account the role of the journalist in accessing information, understanding public offices and other terminology, understanding the procedures involved in public policy development and public administration and understanding the relevance of the various stages of public policy development and of public administration at the level of Scottish local government.

The following areas should be covered in Outcome 1:

- ◆ Local government finance arrangements (rates, council tax), privatisation, contracting out, political parties in local government, local elections and the electoral system, non-electoral forms of public participation and non-elected local governance, value for money and the rise of the performance culture in Scottish local government.

Outcome 2

This Outcome introduces the candidate to the procedures and personnel involved in the development of public policy and in the implementation of public administration at the level of Scottish and UK national government. Again, the delivery of the content should take into account the role of the journalist in accessing information, understanding public offices and other terminology, understanding the procedures involved in public policy development and public administration and understanding the relevance of the various stages of public policy development and of public administration at the level of Scottish and UK national government.

The following areas should be covered in Outcome 2:

- ◆ Key political ideologies (union, independence, federation), devolved and retained powers, the political parties at Holyrood and Westminster, minority government in Scotland, coalition government in Scotland, the Scottish system of proportional representation, consequences of the mixed electoral approach for the Scottish parliamentary system, recent political developments in the Scottish Parliament and at Westminster, consequences of devolution for the Westminster system of government, the West Lothian question, developments in English nationalism.

Higher National Unit specification: support notes (cont)

Unit title: Journalism: Public Affairs

Outcome 3

This Outcome introduces the candidate to the procedures and personnel involved in the development of public policy and in the implementation of public administration at the level of international government. The delivery of the content should take into account the role of the journalist in accessing information, understanding the procedures involved in public policy development and public administration at the level of international government and understanding the relevance of the various stages of public policy development and of public administration at the level of international government.

The following areas should be covered in Outcome 3:

- ◆ Sovereignty, subsidiarity, globalization, the global environment, deregulation, debt relief, the spread of democracy and human rights, the role of peace keeping forces, the threat of nuclear proliferation, global terrorism.

Guidance on the delivery and assessment of this Unit

This is a mandatory Unit within the HNC/HND Practical Journalism.

Teaching should be focused on helping the candidate to understand the executive, legislative and judicial functions of local, national and international government, how these functions relate to the current structures of government and the processes and personnel through which these functions are carried out.

Delivery of this Unit requires a high level of tutor support, ensuring that the candidate has an adequate knowledge and understanding of the structure and operation of local, national (both Scotland and the UK) and international (eg European Union, United Nations) political systems.

Lectures should be supplemented with appropriate handouts to consolidate the background knowledge of the candidate. Additional material may be drawn from the media, outside visits, guest speakers and web resources.

There should be an emphasis on the candidate's own responsibility for identifying and utilising up-to-date sources of information.

Visits to local and national seats of government should be encouraged.

Assessment could take the form of structured question papers with restricted responses, ensuring that the candidate has acquired a comprehensive understanding of the executive, legislative and judicial functions of local, national and international government, how these functions relate to the current structures of government and the processes and personnel through which these functions are carried out.

It is important that assessment of Outcomes should follow the order listed here, 1 to 3. The candidate should firstly be briefed on local government in Scotland, followed by Scottish and UK national governments and finally on international government. International government can relate to, for example, the European Union or the United Nations.

Higher National Unit specification: support notes (cont)

Unit title: Journalism: Public Affairs

This Unit provides the opportunity for integrated assessments with the following mandatory Units: *Journalism: News Writing*, *Journalism: Research and Interview Skills*, *Journalism: Feature Writing* and *Journalism: Sub Editing*.

The purpose of this Unit is to equip the candidate with a working knowledge of local, national and international government. This will enable the candidate to identify current political issues on local, national and international levels, to represent differing political viewpoints, to research relevant materials and to identify and access official government channels of information for journalists.

The content of this Unit could be integrated with other suitable Units within a journalism course which involve research skills, identification of information sources suitable for journalistic practice and writing about current affairs.

Opportunities for developing Core Skills

The delivery and assessment of this Unit may contribute towards the component 'Written Communication' of the Core Skill Communication at SCQF level 6 if the assessment takes the form of a written submission. The general skill for this component is 'Produce well-structured written communication on complex topics'.

In both formative and summative assessment you should encourage the candidate to:

- ◆ present all essential concepts and information, along with supporting detail and authority, in a logical and effective order
- ◆ use a structure that takes account of purpose and audience, and links major and minor points in ways that assist the clarity and impact of the writing
- ◆ use conventions that are effective in achieving the purpose and adapted as necessary for the target audience
- ◆ use spelling, punctuation and sentence structures that are consistently accurate

These skills can be developed through formative activities or exercises, such as short essays discussing aspects of public policy and public administration, without being formally assessed for certification of the Core Skill. Candidates should be encouraged to use an appropriate referencing method for any formative essays.

In both formative and summative assessment candidates should be encouraged to:

- ◆ identify the factors involved in the situation or issue
- ◆ assess the relevance of these factors to the situation or issue
- ◆ develop and justify an approach to deal with the situation or issue

These skills can be developed through formative activities, such as short essays discussing different aspects of public policy and public administration, without being formally assessed for certification of the Core Skill.

Higher National Unit specification: support notes (cont)

Unit title: Journalism: Public Affairs

Open learning

This Unit could be delivered as open learning provided suitable open or online learning material was developed. However, it would require planning by the centre to ensure the sufficiency and authenticity of candidate evidence. Arrangements would have to be made to ensure that the evidence for all Outcomes is generated by assessment undertaken in the mode(s) detailed in the Evidence Requirements for each Outcome.

For further information and advice, please see *Assessment and Quality Assurance for Open and Distance Learning* (SQA, February 2001 — Publication code A1030).

Candidates with disabilities and/or additional support needs

The additional support needs of individual candidates should be taken into account when planning learning experiences, selecting assessment instruments, or considering alternative Outcomes for Units. Further advice can be found in the SQA document *Guidance on Assessment Arrangements for Candidates with Disabilities and/or Additional Support Needs* (www.sqa.org.uk).

General information for candidates

Unit title: Journalism: Public Affairs

This is a 2 credit Unit designed to give you a practical knowledge of local, national and international government organisations and issues. It is designed also to give you a practical understanding of the personnel and procedures involved in the development of public policy and in the implementation of public administration.

Outcome 1 provides an introduction to the structure of local government in Scotland and to the major functions of local government in Scotland. It also covers areas of local government responsibilities in Scotland, as well as an introduction to current journalistic practices with regard to accessing official information from local government.

Outcome 2 covers similar areas of public policy and public administration in the context of Scottish and UK national governments. Current journalistic practices with regard to obtaining official information from Holyrood and Westminster will also be covered.

Outcome 3 will look at the role of international government (for example the European Union or the United Nations) and how international government relates to international issues. Each Centre will decide on which form of international government will be studied, covering all of the criteria for the study of public policy practice and public administration, as well as current journalistic practices with regard to accessing official information from international government.

Outcomes 1, 2 and 3 will be assessed individually.

The Unit offers the opportunity to develop the Communication Core Skill component of Written Communication at SCQF level 6.