



Higher National Unit specification: general information

Unit title: Politics A: An Introduction to Political Theories of the State

Unit code: FK85 34

Superclass: EA

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Version: 02

Unit purpose

This Unit is designed to develop candidates' knowledge and understanding of political concepts and theories of the state relevant to the relationship between the state and the individual. The Unit will develop the candidate's ability to explain different political concepts and theories of the state in a critical way, and evaluate and apply these concepts to theories of the state. It is intended for candidates who have a general interest in politics as well as those who would use it as the theoretical basis for further study.

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

- 1 Explain political concepts and theories of the state.
- 2 Evaluate political concepts and apply them to theories of the state.

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 SCQF levels 5 or 6, or other similar qualifications, is desirable but not essential.

Ultimately, entry is at the discretion of the centre.

General information (cont)

Credit points and level

1 Higher National Unit credit at SCQF level 7: (8 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.*

Core Skills

There are opportunities to develop the Core Skills of *Communication* at SCQF level 6 and *Information and Communication Technology* at SCQF level 5 in this Unit, although there is no automatic certification of Core Skills or Core Skills components.

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.

Assessment

This Unit will be holistically assessed by a single instrument of assessment covering all Unit Outcomes. This will take the form of an open book assessment covering **one** classical and **one** modern theory of the state, and **two** political concepts.

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

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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 political concepts and theories of the state

Knowledge and/or Skills

- ◆ two political concepts relevant to the relationship between the state and the individual
- ◆ main features of one classical and one modern theory of the state

Note: The classical period refers to up to and including Machiavelli; the modern period refers to the period from Hobbes onwards.

Outcome 2

Evaluate political concepts and apply them to theories of the state

Knowledge and/or Skills

- ◆ evaluation of political concepts
- ◆ application of political concepts to a classical and a modern theory of the state
- ◆ relationship between the state and the individual

Higher National Unit specification: statement of standards (cont)

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Evidence Requirements for the Unit

Candidates will need to provide evidence to demonstrate their Knowledge and/or Skills by showing that they can:

- ◆ apply knowledge and skills to one classical and one modern theory of the state, and two political concepts
- ◆ explain two political concepts
- ◆ describe the main features of one classical and one modern theory of the state
- ◆ evaluate two political concepts in the context of their relevance to the relationship between the state and the individual
- ◆ apply two political concepts to one classical and one modern theory of the state

This unit will be holistically assessed by a single open book instrument of assessment covering all unit outcomes. Regardless of the assessment method chosen, the candidate must submit a bibliography presented in a standard referencing format, such as Harvard.

Assessment Guidelines for the Unit

The assessment for Outcome 1 is linked with the assessment for Outcome 2 by instructing candidates to explain and evaluate two political concepts, and describe two theories of the state and apply the concepts to the theories.

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 could take the form of an open book essay *or* set of structured questions with an expected candidate response of approximately 1500 words *or* an individual oral presentation *or* poster exhibition with expected candidate's response of 10 to 12 minutes in presentation or explanation of the poster *or* any other method that is appropriate to meet the evidence requirements. Candidates could also provide the evidence requirements in the form of an individual Blog or creation of a website, with approximately 1500 words. Tutors should make candidates aware of the importance of the judicious selection of appropriate academic sources.

It is possible to combine the oral presentation with the poster exhibition, where the candidate covers, for example, the two political concepts in a poster and covers the two theories of the state in an oral presentation on the same assessment occasion. Where this occurs the total time for all aspects would be 10 to 12 minutes (rather than 10 to 12 minutes each). See 'Guidance on delivery and assessment' for further details. It is recommended that oral presentations are recorded in some form.

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

Higher National Unit specification: support notes

Unit title: Politics A: An Introduction to Political Theories of the State

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 40 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 Awards. This Unit prepares candidates for *Politics B: The United Kingdom and Scotland*. 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 interesting and engaging introduction to politics that will serve as a theoretical foundation for subsequent politics Units. The Unit provides an overview of politics by introducing candidates to important political concepts and theories of the state.

The two political concepts chosen to be covered may include: accountability, citizenship, democracy, equality, justice, liberty, power and authority or rights. This is an indicative list, but appropriate alternative political concepts may be introduced. The classical theory of the state to be covered could relate to one of the following theorists: Plato, Aristotle, St. Augustine, St. Thomas Aquinas, Cicero or Machiavelli. The modern theory of the state to be covered could relate to one of the following theorists: Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, Burke, de Tocqueville, Thomas Jefferson, J.S. Mill, Hayek, Marx, Bakunin, Lenin, Gramsci, Michels, Popper, Miliband, Poulantzas, Michael Mann, Pareto, Samuel Huntington, Rawls, George Woodcock, Habermas, Nozick, Arendt, Chomsky, Macmurray. This is an indicative list, but appropriate alternative theories and theorists may be introduced. Candidates will gain a greater understanding of the historical development and continuing relevance of political theories if they are introduced to the work of more than just the two theorists chosen for assessment.

Political science is an ancient subject with an immediate relevance to the contemporary world. Candidates should be encouraged to understand the links that can be made between political theories, often expressed a long time ago, and their relevance to current political issues. It is also important that candidates are encouraged to examine the changing nature of the relationship that can evolve between a state and its citizens. The examination of political concepts in relation to relevant historical and recent political events will facilitate this. Study of this topic will present candidates with a variety of opposing political theories and opinions. This will enable candidates to understand the reasons why there is often disagreement amongst political commentators as to how best a state may be governed.

Before considering in detail various political concepts and theories of the state it would be useful for candidates to think about questions such as:

- ◆ What is the purpose behind the study of political theory?
- ◆ How is it that decisions taken by the state can so profoundly shape the lives of individuals?

A questioning approach is useful as it gets the candidates to think like social scientists and be analytical and enquiring, rather than passively accepting.

Higher National Unit specification: support notes (cont)

Unit title: Politics A: An Introduction to Political Theories of the State

The study of different theories of the state should provide candidates with a clear outline of what is distinctive about each. This should highlight the different perspectives on the human condition held by the theorists chosen for study. When and why these particular theorists developed their ideas could be covered (i.e. who or what influenced the development of particular viewpoints or major theories).

The study of different political concepts will enable candidates to understand the variety and complexity of the relationships that can exist between a state and its individual citizens. They should be encouraged to appreciate the fact that the end result of abstract political concepts and theories can have a real impact on their community's daily lives.

Guidance on the delivery and assessment of this Unit

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 an appropriate assessment instrument based on a method that is suitable in allowing candidates to meet the evidence requirements. This 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 (or poster exhibitions) must be done individually as each candidate has to show evidence of meeting all evidence requirements, so a group presentation would not be suitable.

If the Centre is using a Blog or creation of a website as the way of gathering evidence, this should not be in the public domain. Rather it should be on an Intranet or private area of a VLE to reduce the likelihood of plagiarism. 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.

A Centre can choose to use a mixture of methods across a cohort, as it may be more suitable for some candidates to give a written response and for others to use an oral method or to create a Blog etc. It is possible to combine the poster exhibition with an oral presentation, where, for example, a candidate may produce a detailed poster of two political concepts and would cover the two theories of the state in an oral presentation using PPT or a mind map as a visual aid. Alternatively, they could cover both concepts and theories in a poster but evaluate the concepts in relation to their relevance to the relationship between state and individual as part of a following oral presentation. An oral presentation could similarly be used when applying the concepts to the theories. The time across the 2 concepts and 2 theories, with all evidence requirements covered would be 10 – 12 minutes (not 10 – 12 minutes each for the poster and for the oral presentations, but rather combining both in the time). They should also be done on the same occasion. Whichever method is chosen the candidates should be allowed access to notes, text books or other materials, as the assessment must be conducted open book.

Higher National Unit specification: support notes (cont)

Unit title: Politics A: An Introduction to Political Theories of the State

Centres should make sure they can authenticate a candidate's work. 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.

Remediation 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. If it is thought appropriate that a candidate tackle a different topic or question, then that new submission would count as a reassessment.

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 would help to reduce the need for reassessment. However, where more work is required to meet the evidence requirements (eg where the quality of evidence is poor in a presentation) another presentation of the same duration, on the same topic or question as the original would be required. Only where a different topic or question is attempted would this be classed as reassessment.

Opportunities for developing Core Skills

The delivery and assessment of this Unit may contribute towards the development of Core Skills of *Communication* and *Information and Communication Technology*. 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 SCQF level 6** 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. It is part of the evidence requirements for the Unit to ensure candidates convey complex ideas in a well-structured and coherent way. This can be stressed in delivery and in formative work, as well as being considered in summative assessment.

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 a political concept or on a theory of the state, without being formally assessed for certification of Core Skill. The topics covered are complex, so should easily fit with SCQF level 6.

Higher National Unit specification: support notes (cont)

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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, for any formative or summative essays. Referencing, citation and bibliography skills are best developed using the vehicle of formative essay writing. It is part of the summative assessment to have an appropriate bibliography submitted in a standard referencing format.

For oral communication at SCQF level 6 the skill is: produce and respond to oral communication on a complex topic. In both formative and summative assessment the candidate could be encouraged to give a detailed oral presentation on the two political concepts and two theories of state, 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 or in an oral explanation of a poster exhibition. 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 the Centre is able to give a choice).

For the Core Skill of Information and Communication Technology at SCQF level 5 the skills are : 'Accessing Information, use ICT independently, effectively, and responsibly to access information within a range of tasks' and 'Providing/Creating Information, use ICT independently, effectively, and responsibly to carry out a range of processing 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. Creating a Blog or a website for the summative assessment is another way in which this Core Skill can be developed. This could be used where candidates (and their lecturer) have particular skills and interest in ICT.

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.

Higher National Unit specification: support notes (cont)

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Curriculum for Excellence

The Curriculum for Excellence aspires to place learners at the centre of the curriculum and develop their capacities as Successful Learners, Confident Individuals, Responsible Citizens and Effective Contributors. The four capacities will be developed throughout this unit. This unit will develop the literacy and communication skills of the learners by way of formative and summative assessments. Independent learning is required throughout this unit, whilst the opportunity is available for group learning through formative tasks. The subject of politics demands independent thinking, and through reasoned evaluation encourages learners to reach satisfactory conclusions. Further opportunity is offered to develop technological skills by way of researching via the internet, the production of word documents, PowerPoint presentations, blogs and/or the creation of a website. Collectively these skills contribute towards the creation of a **Successful Learner**.

Time management skills should improve during the delivery of this Unit, as should the ability to relate to others through formative tasks. The topics in Politics A should allow the learner to develop their own thoughts of the world around them, and they will be given the opportunity to express these views within the classroom setting. This should lend to the emergence of a **Confident Individual**, particularly if they gain success in the achievement of the Unit.

Politics A can also contribute to learners becoming **Responsible Citizens** by allowing the opportunity to develop knowledge and understanding regarding the changing nature of the relationship that can evolve between a state and its citizens. Candidates will be encouraged to develop a more positive view of the active part that they can play within their community. Furthermore, informed, ethical views of complex issues can be developed, as can an understanding of different political issues and controversies.

Learners can become **Effective Contributors** to society by learning to work together effectively in teams within the class setting. This can be achieved through group-work where they can apply critical thinking within new contexts. In planning group tasks, evaluating data and presenting their findings, learners will also develop problem solving skills. Both oral and written communication skills will also be developed. This can be achieved through written work, individual PowerPoint presentations, and the creation of blogs and websites.

All these skills can be developed within the Unit.

Open learning

This Unit could be delivered by open or distance learning; however, it would require planning by the centre to ensure sufficiency and authenticity of candidate evidence.

A written response in the form of an essay or answers to structured questions 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.

Higher National Unit specification: support notes (cont)

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Disabled candidates and/or those with additional support needs

The additional support needs of individual candidates should be taken into account when planning learning experiences, selecting assessment instruments, or considering whether any reasonable adjustments may be required. Further advice can be found on our website www.sqa.org.uk/assessmentarrangements.

History of changes to Unit

Version	Description of change	Date
02	Clarification of remediation and reassessment.	16/10/12

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General information for candidates

Unit title: Politics A: An Introduction to Political Theories of the State

This Unit aims to introduce you to political concepts and theories of the state. You will look at political concepts such as accountability, citizenship, democracy, equality, justice, liberty, power and authority and rights and examine how they help us to understand the relationships that can exist between a state and the individuals within it. You will also be introduced to a number of theories of the state and learn about how various theorists such as Marx and Mill thought a society could best be governed. In addition you will learn that evaluating concepts and applying them to theories is central to an understanding of politics. You will be encouraged to develop an enquiring mind, with evaluative skills highlighted throughout.

At the end of the Unit you will undertake an assessment that will focus on two political concepts and two theories of the state that you have studied. You will be given the task/question at an appropriate point in the delivery of the Unit. The assessment may be a written essay of approximately 1500 words *or* a set of structured questions with an expected response of approximately 1500 words *or* an oral presentation of 10 to 12 minutes *or* a poster exhibition of 10 to 12 minutes oral explanation *or* another method decided by your Centre. Your centre will inform you of the chosen method, which will be *open book*. This means that you will be allowed access to materials (e.g. text books, notes, VLE).

As you progress through the Unit material, you will be encouraged to develop the Core Skills of *Communication* at SCQF level 6 and *Information and Communication Technology* at SCQF level 5 by the types of activities you will experience.

You will also be given opportunities throughout the Unit to develop as a successful learner, a confident individual, a responsible citizen and an effective contributor.