Higher National Unit Specification

General information

Unit title: Politics B: The United Kingdom and Scotland (SCQF level 7)

Unit code: J0H0 34

Superclass: EE

Publication date: November 2018

Source: Scottish Qualifications Authority

Version: 03

Unit purpose

This unit is designed to develop learners’ knowledge and understanding of the UK and Scottish systems of government. Learners 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.

Learners will also study concepts which relate to Scotland’s constitutional position within the United Kingdom. This unit is intended for those learners who wish to develop their knowledge and understanding of politics and for those who wish to use it as a basis for further study.

Outcomes

On successful completion of the unit the learner will 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 Higher National unit credit(s) at SCQF level 7: (16 SCQF credit points at SCQF level 7)
Higher National Unit Specification: General information (cont)

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Recommended entry to the unit

Learners 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. Learners would benefit from achievement of HN unit Politics A: An Introduction to Political Theories of the State.

Ultimately, entry is at the discretion of the centre.

Core Skills

Achievement of this Unit gives automatic certification of the following Core Skills component:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Complete Core Skill</th>
<th>None</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Core Skill component</td>
<td>Critical Thinking at SCQF level 5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There are also opportunities to develop aspects of Core Skills which are highlighted in the Support Notes of this Unit specification.

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 in the optional section of the HNC/D Social Sciences awards. It can also be offered as a stand-alone unit.

The Assessment Support Pack (ASP) for this unit provides assessment and marking guidelines that exemplify the national standard for achievement. It is a valid, reliable and practicable assessment. Centres wishing to develop their own assessments should refer to the ASP to ensure a comparable standard. A list of existing ASPs is available to download from SQA’s website (http://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/46233.html).

Equality and inclusion

This unit specification has been designed to ensure that there are no unnecessary barriers to learning or assessment. The individual needs of learners should be taken into account when planning learning experiences, selecting assessment methods or considering alternative evidence.

Further advice can be found on our website www.sqa.org.uk/assessmentarrangements.
Higher National Unit Specification: Statement of standards

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Acceptable performance in this unit will be the satisfactory achievement of the standards set out in this part of the unit specification. All sections of the statement of standards are mandatory and cannot be altered without reference to SQA.

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. Learners 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

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
♦ Relationship between Westminster and Holyrood
♦ Impact of devolution on Scotland
♦ Debates regarding the concepts of unionism, devolution and separatism

Evidence requirements

Outcome 1

Learners will need to provide evidence to demonstrate their knowledge and/or skills across all outcomes by showing that they can:

♦ Analyse the importance of each topic to the governance of the United Kingdom
♦ Explain the main features of each topic
♦ Discuss the relationships of topics to the governance of the United Kingdom
♦ Analyse the roles and functions of political topics within the UK political system

The knowledge and skills for the outcome will be sampled in the assessment. Learners will be assessed on two topics chosen from the topics listed in the support notes (Guidance on content and context).
Higher National Unit Specification: Statement of standards

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This part of the unit will be assessed by a closed-book assessment, which means learners will be assessed without the use of notes, textbooks, VLE or other materials in a supervised setting. Broad guidance on the area to be assessed will be given one week prior to the assessment date.

A written response should be 1,000 words approximately; an oral response should be eight minutes approximately. It is likely that if it is a written assessment, it will take between 90 minutes and two hours.

In response to the task set, the learner must convey complex ideas in a well-structured and coherent form.

Outcome 2

Learners will need to provide evidence to demonstrate their knowledge and/or skills across all outcomes by showing that they can:

♣ Describe the key developments from 1979 in the process of establishing devolution
♣ Analyse the relationship between the UK and Scottish Parliaments
♣ Evaluate the impact of devolution on Scotland
♣ Analyse the debates regarding the concepts of unionism, devolution and separatism in relation to Scotland’s constitutional position within the UK

Outcome 2 will be assessed by a single open-book instrument of assessment. Learners will be given the task at an appropriate point in the delivery of the unit.

In response to the task set, the learner must convey complex ideas in a well-structured and coherent form. A written response should be 2,000 words approximately; an oral response should be 12–15 minutes in duration.

As the assessment is open-book learners will be allowed access to materials (eg, text books, notes, VLE).

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

Note: Topic areas are listed in the Guidance on content and context.
Higher National Unit Support Notes

Unit title: Politics B: The United Kingdom and Scotland (SCQF level 7)

Unit support notes are offered as guidance and 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 awards. This unit is designed to further develop concepts learned in HN unit Politics A: An Introduction to Political Theories of the State and to 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 stand-alone 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 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, learners will consider the debates concerning Scotland’s constitutional position within the United Kingdom.

Outcome 1 of this unit will focus on six political topics:

(a) The UK Constitution
(b) The UK Executive
(c) The UK Parliament
(d) The UK party political system
(e) The UK parliamentary electoral system
(f) Pressure groups in the UK

In relation to (a) learners should be introducing 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 shift in the locus of sovereignty. It is also important that they understand the relevance of limited government, bicameralism and devolution.

In relation to (b) learners should explain and discuss the role, functions and powers of the Prime Minister and cabinet. Learners 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.
Higher National Unit Support Notes (cont)

Unit title: Politics B: The United Kingdom and Scotland (SCQF level 7)

In relation to (c) learners 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 (d) learners 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 learner selection procedures.

In relation to (e) the learner should analyse and evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the current electoral system as utilised in UK parliamentary elections and contrast with the system in Scotland. This should include an analysis of voting behaviour and changes to patterns of voting behaviour.

In relation to (f) learners 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 four political topics:

(a) The process of establishing devolution in Scotland
(b) The relationship between Westminster and the Scottish Parliament
(c) The impact of devolution
(d) Concepts relating to Scotland’s constitutional position

In relation to (a) learners should analyse the key developments in the process which led to the establishment of a devolved Scottish Parliament and Government.

In relation to (b) learners should understand the powers and functions of the Scottish Parliament and the Scottish Government, plus those powers reserved to Westminster. They should evaluate the relationship between the Scottish Parliament and Westminster looking at areas of collaboration, conflict and compromise.

In relation to (c) learners should evaluate the impact on Scotland of some of the Scottish Parliament’s main policy initiatives.

In relation to (d) learners 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 learners 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 approaches to delivery 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.
Guidance on approaches to assessment of this unit

There are a wide variety of methods of assessment that would allow learners 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.

Outcome 1

This assessment could take the form of a set of unseen structured questions requiring a response of approximately 1,000 words across all questions or an essay, also requiring approximately 1,000 words or an oral response to set questions requiring the learner to respond in sustained detail for approximately eight minutes or an oral presentation of approximately eight minutes’ duration or another method decided by the centre. As this is a closed-book assessment, it would not be appropriate for learners to use visual aids (such as PowerPoint presentations or posters) in the oral presentation, rather it would be a sustained presentation without the aid of notes. The topic used for assessment should be changed each year for sampling purposes. Broad guidance on the area to be assessed will be given one week prior to the assessment date. It is likely that if it is a written assessment it will take between 90 minutes and two hours to complete.

Outcome 2

This assessment could take the form of an open-book essay or set of structured questions with an expected learner response of approximately 2,000 words or an individual oral presentation or a poster exhibition with expected learner’s response of 12–15 minutes in presentation or explanation of poster, a podcast 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. Learners could also provide the evidence requirements in the form of an individual blog, or creation of a website, with approximately 2,000 words.

NB: It is important that the language used in these assessments reflect SCQF level 7 in each type of task.

Centres are reminded that prior verification of centre-devised assessments would help to ensure that the national standard is being met. Where learners experience a range of assessment methods, this helps them to develop different skills that should be transferable to work or further and higher education.

Centres should design appropriate assessment instruments based on methods that are suitable in allowing learners to meet the evidence requirements. These can be written or oral (developing on the needs of the learners 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 learner has to show evidence of meeting all evidence requirements, so a group presentation would not be suitable.
Higher National Unit Support Notes (cont)

Unit title: Politics B: The United Kingdom and Scotland (SCQF level 7)

If a 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. Authentication of the learner’s work is essential. It would be helpful to collect notes or PPT presentation materials from the learner as further evidence of meeting SCQF level 7 in the presentation.

Centres should make sure they can authenticate a learner’s work for Outcome 2. This may be done by questioning a learner about their work, by seeing drafts of work under construction, by having a partial write-up in the presence of the assessor or by using an anti-plagiarism tool, such as Turnitin or SafeAssign, which checks internet sites.

Remediation and re-assessment

Remediation for Outcome 1 could 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 in total approximately 100 words or less per outcome. If these conditions cannot be met, then the learner should be reassessed using a different set of questions for Outcome 1.

Remediation for Outcome 2 should be done by a review of the original work. The learner 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. Lecturers and tutors should use their professional judgement with regards to the number of words that can be added. Oral clarification could be used for minor omissions or to clarify minor detail. If it is thought appropriate that a learner tackle a different topic or question, then that new submission would count as a re-assessment.

In oral work, learners 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 a re-assessment.

Opportunities for e-assessment

E-assessment may be appropriate for some assessments in this unit. By e-assessment we mean assessment which is supported by Information and Communication Technology (ICT), such as e-testing or the use of e-portfolios or social software. Centres which wish to use e-assessment must ensure that the national standard is applied to all learner evidence and that conditions of assessment as specified in the evidence requirements are met, regardless of the mode of gathering evidence. The most up-to-date guidance on the use of e-assessment to support SQA’s qualifications is available at www.sqa.org.uk/e-assessment.
Opportunities for developing Core and other essential skills

The delivery and assessment of this unit may contribute towards the development of Core Skills in 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 level if the assessment takes the form of an essay/report 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 learners 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 Outcome 2 to ensure learners 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 learners 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 each topic, without being formally assessed for certification of the Core Skill. The topics that centres can choose are complex so should easily fit with SCQF level 6.

It is important to develop report writing or essay-writing skills for learners’ future progression. Learners 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. The assessment for Outcome 2 could be a written report that would be to a prescribed format, but would include the need for referencing and citation skills.

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 learner 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 learners to work in a small group, with a few people contributing to the presentation. This may allow a learner 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).
Higher National Unit Support Notes (cont)

Unit title: Politics B: The United Kingdom and Scotland (SCQF level 7)

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, using 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 of 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 learners to take responsibility for learning by encouraging the development of research skills via the internet or using textbooks.

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 and in the summative assessment for Outcome 2. 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 B 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 B can also contribute to learners becoming Responsible Citizens by allowing the opportunity to develop knowledge and understanding of the UK and Scottish systems of government. Learners will be encouraged to develop a more positive view of their role as a citizen within UK/Scottish society. Furthermore, informed, ethical views of complex constitutional issues can be developed, as can an understanding of different political points of view.

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.
Higher National Unit Support Notes (cont)

Unit title: Politics B: The United Kingdom and Scotland (SCQF level 7)

This Unit has the Critical Thinking component of Problem Solving embedded in it. This means that when learners achieve the Unit, their Core Skills profile will also be updated to show they have achieved Critical Thinking at SCQF level 5.
## History of changes to unit

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Version</th>
<th>Description of change</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>03</td>
<td>Page 4, paragraph 2, the first sentence changed to read as follows:</td>
<td>12/11/2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“A written response should be 1000 words approximately; an oral response should be eight minutes approximately”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>02</td>
<td>Core Skills Component Critical Thinking at SCQF level 5 embedded.</td>
<td>31/08/2018</td>
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General information for learners

Unit title: Politics B: The United Kingdom and Scotland (SCQF level 7)

This section will help you decide whether this is the unit for you by explaining what the unit is about, what you should know or be able to do before you start, what you will need to do during the unit and opportunities for further learning and employment.

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 1,000 words across all questions or an essay, also requiring approximately 1,000 words or an oral response to set questions requiring a response in sustained detail for approximately eight minutes or another form of oral presentation of approximately eight 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 and two hours 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 learner response of approximately 2,000 words or an individual oral presentation or poster exhibition with expected learner’s response of 12–15 minutes in presentation or explanation of poster, a podcast 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 2,000 words.

As you progress through the unit, 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 this unit to develop as a Successful Learner, a Confident Individual, a Responsible Citizen and an Effective Contributor.

This Unit has the Critical Thinking component of Problem Solving embedded in it. This means that when you achieve the Unit, your Core Skills profile will also be updated to show you have achieved Critical Thinking at SCQF level 5.