

## National Unit Specification: general information

**UNIT** Political Representation

**CODE** DV4V 12

**COURSE** Politics (Higher)

### SUMMARY

This Unit is a mandatory Unit in the Higher Politics Course although it can also be taken as a free-standing Unit.

This Unit will enable candidates to focus on the issue of political representation and the controversies that surround it. The intention of this Unit is to introduce the candidate to different models of representation and the types of electoral system that are already used for different elections in the UK at local, Scottish, UK and European level. By comparing and contrasting those used in the UK with other possible systems the candidates will achieve a more thorough knowledge and understanding of representation. The role of political parties and interest groups, the use of referenda as a special case, the role of opinion polls and the short-term and long-term influences on voting are all critical topics within the Unit. Candidates will also be expected to develop the skills of analysis, interpretation and evaluation using data from the various election campaigns in the UK.

For those new to the subject, the Unit should stimulate interest and enjoyment, and may serve as an introduction to the discipline of Politics. For candidates progressing from Units at Intermediate 2 the Unit provides the opportunity to study some familiar as well as new topics related to representation and elections and it will promote development of more in-depth knowledge and understanding.

As part of Higher Politics, the Unit provides suitable preparation for entry to higher education courses in Politics or further study in other subjects. Whether as part of a Course or on a free-standing basis, the Unit may offer preparation for employment or career advancement. The topics chosen for study in this Unit are likely to be of relevance and interest to candidates personally and socially.

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### Administrative Information

**Superclass:** EA

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## National Unit Specification: general information (cont)

**UNIT** Political Representation (Higher)

### OUTCOMES

- 1 Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of representation and electoral systems.
- 2 Analyse and evaluate electoral data.

### RECOMMENDED ENTRY

While entry is at the discretion of the centre, candidates would normally be expected to have attained one of the following, or equivalent:

- ◆ A Standard Grade Social Subject at Credit level or an equivalent Intermediate 2 Course or Units  
**or**
- ◆ Intermediate 2 Politics Units

**and** Standard Grade English at Credit level or Communication at Intermediate 2.

### CREDIT VALUE

1 credit(s) at Higher level (6 SCQF credit points at SCQF level 6\*)

*\*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

Achievement of this Unit gives automatic certification of the following:

Complete Core Skill	None
Core Skills component	Critical Thinking at SCQF Level 6

## **National Unit Specification: statement of standards**

### **UNIT Political Representation (Higher)**

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 the Scottish Qualifications Authority.

#### **OUTCOME 1**

Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of representation and electoral systems.

##### **Performance Criteria**

- (a) Theories of representation and voting behavior in the UK are described accurately.
- (b) The key features of majoritarian and proportional electoral systems are explained accurately.

#### **OUTCOME 2**

Analyse and evaluate electoral data.

##### **Performance Criteria**

- (a) Electoral data is analysed to reach accurate and valid conclusions.
- (b) Sources related to elections are evaluated to identify and explain examples of bias and selective argument.

### **EVIDENCE REQUIREMENTS FOR THIS UNIT**

The content and context for this Unit is specified in Appendix 1 — Statement of Standards.

Evidence Requirements apply to the Unit as a whole, and therefore, apply holistically to all Outcomes of the Unit. To demonstrate satisfactory attainment of all Outcomes of the Unit, candidates must produce written or recorded oral responses to items that cover Performance Criteria from all Outcomes. These will typically be produced in response to specific questions in an assessment comprising a mixture of short-answer, restricted response and more extended response items; questions may be structured, and may be based on stimulus material. This will take the form of a closed-book, supervised test, with a time limit of one hour and will be holistic, covering all Outcomes and Performance Criteria.

Each assessment will sample the range of possible content. The sample will be unpredictable in order that the complete Unit is covered in learning and teaching. The sampling will be balanced so that no assessment is any easier or more difficult than any other in terms of the spread of content covered or the nature of the items. If the candidate is able to demonstrate attainment in a random selection of items, it can be inferred that attainment in the areas not sampled would also be satisfactory.

If reassessment is required, it should consist of a fresh assessment instrument. This should sample different areas from the range of content.

Achievement can be determined by a cut-off score. The standard to be applied and the breadth of coverage are illustrated in the National Assessment Bank items available for this Unit. If a centre wishes to design its own assessments for this Unit, they should be of a comparable standard. It is recommended that such an instrument of assessment should be submitted to SQA for prior moderation.

## **National Unit Specification: support notes**

### **UNIT Political Representation (Higher)**

This part of the Unit Specification is offered as guidance. The support notes are not mandatory.

While the 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**

The content of this Unit is detailed under Course Content in the Course details. An expanded description of the content for this Unit is attached as an appendix to this Unit Specification.

#### **GUIDANCE ON LEARNING AND TEACHING APPROACHES FOR THIS UNIT**

This Unit will focus on the issue of representation and the controversies that surround it. The candidates will cover competing theories of representation, based on particular ideological assumptions, which link well with some of the content in the *Political Theory* Unit.

The intention of this Unit is to introduce the candidate to different models of representation and the types of electoral system that are already used for different elections in the UK at local, Scottish, UK and European level and also to look at the Presidential electoral system in the USA. The use of Referenda as a special case should be introduced while the role of political parties and pressure groups in the electoral process should be covered. Candidates should be aware of opinion polls and their uses and the short-term and long-term influences on voting behaviour are critical for political parties seeking election.

Candidates will also be expected to develop the skills of analysis, interpretation and evaluation using data from the various election campaigns in the UK and the USA Presidential elections. Specific knowledge of these campaigns will not be assessed.

Where this Unit is being delivered as part of a Course, Units can be taught in any order or in an integrated manner. An integrated approach would enable the teaching and learning process to emphasise the holistic and integrative nature of the subject. It is also possible to teach Units in parallel with each other eg exploring several political concepts like the state, power, authority and legitimacy from the *Political Theory* Unit while applying them in the UK and either Scotland or the USA political contexts in the *Political Structures* Unit or the concept of democracy while teaching the electoral systems and electoral reforms in this Unit. If Units are taught separately it is important that the concepts and ideologies within the *Political Theory* Unit are taught first because they underpin many of the topics within this Unit and the *Political Structures* Units.

## **National Unit Specification: support notes (cont)**

### **UNIT        Political Representation (Higher)**

#### **GUIDANCE ON APPROACHES TO ASSESSMENT FOR THIS UNIT**

While teachers/lecturers may devise their own assessment tasks the National Assessment Bank will provide assessment instruments and guidance on implementation. The most appropriate means of obtaining evidence of attainment of the Outcomes of this Unit will be an assessment covering both Outcomes, comprising a mixture of short-answer and more extended response items, where questions may be structured, and may be based on stimulus material; to be conducted under supervised test conditions, lasting no more than 60 minutes.

The marking scheme should reflect the standard embodied in the Performance Criteria. This will allow the evidence to be considered as a whole. The level of attainment required for successful completion of the Unit should represent satisfactory attainment of the Outcomes and, by inference, satisfactory coverage of all Performance Criteria.

Care should be taken to ensure that sufficient time is allowed for support and reassessment of candidates if required.

Where suitable tasks can be set which allow candidates to demonstrate competence beyond the minimum standard required, evidence gathered for Unit assessment may also be used for grade prediction and for appeals for the Course assessment. For details of the grade descriptions for Grade C and Grade A in the Course assessment, refer to the Politics Higher Course Specification.

#### **CANDIDATES WITH ADDITIONAL SUPPORT NEEDS**

This Unit Specification is intended to ensure that there are no artificial barriers to learning or assessment. 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. For information on these, please refer to the SQA document *Guidance on Assessment Arrangements for Candidates with Disabilities and/or Additional Support Needs* (SQA, 2004).

**UNIT Political Representation (Higher)**

*NB: This Appendix is within the statement of standards, ie the mandatory requirements of the Unit.*

**Content and Context**

This Unit will focus on the issue of representation and the controversies that surround it. The candidates will cover competing theories of representation, based on particular ideological assumptions, which link well with some of the content in the *Political Theory* Unit. The intention of this Unit is to introduce the candidate to different models of representation and the types of electoral system that are already used for different elections in the UK at local, Scottish, UK and European level and also to look at the Presidential electoral system in the USA. The use of Referenda as a special case should be introduced while the role of political parties and pressure groups in the electoral process should be covered. Candidates should be aware of opinion polls and their uses and the short-term and long-term influences on voting behaviour are critical for political parties seeking election.

Candidates will also be expected to develop the skills of analysis, interpretation and evaluation using data from the various election campaigns in the UK and the USA Presidential elections. Specific knowledge of these campaigns will not be assessed.

The background to this Unit involves introducing candidates to models of Democracy — the identification of criteria for defining democracy; models of democracy — direct, representative, liberal and people's democracies — should be described and explained using appropriate historical and/or contemporary examples. The advantages and disadvantages of democracy must be covered from different viewpoints.

**Representation** — the nature of representation; theories of representation — the trustee, delegate, mandate and resemblance models; links between representation and elections, political parties and pressure groups.

The Trustee and Delegate Models were developed before the emergence of modern political parties and therefore they view representatives as individual actors. The trustee theory suggests that the role of a representative is to act in the interest of his or her constituents. This theory presents a solution to the problem of uninformed constituents that do not have the necessary knowledge on issues to take an educated position on issues. The representative is "entrusted" with the position to make decisions that will benefit the district he or she represents. This position also allows for the representative to take into consideration other benefactors such as the state or nation as a whole. This definition is put forward by Edmund Burke and is clearly based on a historical period where mass education did not take place and illiteracy was rife. It has been criticised as being anti-democratic. The delegate theory of representation counters this ideal of representation. The delegate model suggests that the legislator should act only on the instruction of his or her constituents. In this role, representatives are elected by a local group or constituency, and sent to deliver the group's vote. This theory does not provide representatives the luxury of acting in their own conscience, and often fails to take the good of the state or nation into account. In essence, the representative acts as the voice of those who are not literally present.

## National Unit Specification: statement of standards (cont)

### UNIT Political Representation (Higher)

Since the advent of political parties and universal adult suffrage new theories of representation have emerged. The Mandate Theory is based on the idea that in winning an election a party gains a popular mandate that authorises it to carry out whatever policies and/or programmes outlined in its Election manifesto. Candidates should be aware of the strengths and weaknesses of such a theory particularly when some governments are elected by gaining less than 50% of the popular vote. The Resemblance Theory refers to whether those elected are in fact a representative cross-section — the extent to which they typify or resemble the group they claim to represent. Many would argue this is too narrow or exclusive a view of representation to be useful.

#### Theories of Voting Behaviour

Candidates should be aware of some of the short-term and long-term influences on voting behaviour; short-term — these are usually specific to a particular election — the state of the economy, personality and public-standing of party leaders, style and effectiveness of the campaign and the mass media; long-term — these are best summed up in several theories of voting behaviour and include:

- ◆ the party-identification model — based on a sense of psychological attachment to a party; early political socialisation with the family as the main influence reinforced later by group membership and experiences; attitudes and perceptions are learned. Candidates need to be aware of partisan de-alignment — a general fall in party identification and habitual voting patterns
- ◆ the sociological model — voting behaviour is linked to the economic and social position of a particular group that the voter belongs to — social class, gender, ethnicity, religion and region are examples. The role of the individual and personal self-interest are ignored here. Empirical evidence is that the link between sociological factors and party support has weakened
- ◆ the rational-choice model — the individual is at the heart of this making rational decisions based on personal self-interest; issue-voting becomes important in this model
- ◆ the dominant-ideology model — similar to sociological theories but the role of the mass media is much stronger — a process of social conditioning where individual choices are perhaps shaped by ideological manipulation and control.

#### Elections and Electoral systems

Candidates should be aware of the functions of elections and the advantages and disadvantages of a number of electoral systems, including the simple plurality system, the second ballot system, the alternative vote system, additional member system, single transferable vote system and the party list system; some examples of the use of referenda in the UK and Presidential elections in the USA will be expected. The main electoral systems to compare in terms of advantages and disadvantages are listed below.

#### First Past the Post (FPTP)

The system currently used for electing members to the House of Commons is a plurality system with single member constituencies. Winning candidates simply gain more votes than any other candidate on a single count. This need not be an absolute majority of the votes cast in a constituency.

## **National Unit Specification: statement of standards (cont)**

### **UNIT Political Representation (Higher)**

#### **The Alternative Vote (AV)**

The Alternative Vote, which like FPTP is based upon single member constituencies, is a majoritarian system. Winning candidates secure the support of over half the voters in a constituency. The vote is exercised by recording preferences against the candidates on the ballot paper. If no candidate receives more than half of the votes cast on the first count of first preference votes, the candidate who received the fewest first preference votes is eliminated and his/her second preferences are distributed between the other candidates. This process continues until one candidate has achieved an overall majority.

#### **Second Ballot**

As with the Alternative Vote the main objective of the Second Ballot system is to increase the chances of a candidate being elected on an absolute majority of the vote. Voting takes place on two separate days. If no candidate achieves an absolute majority after the first ballot a second ballot takes place. Where more than two candidates are allowed to progress to the second ballot a majority result cannot necessarily be guaranteed but, typically, candidates not performing well in the first ballot will withdraw and throw their support behind a candidate with a better chance of winning.

#### **List Systems**

The rationale of list systems is to translate directly a party's share of the vote into an equivalent proportion of seats in parliament. The precise proportionality of such systems will, however, be influenced by such factors as whether the country is treated as a single constituency for the purpose of voting and the allocation of seats (some systems involve the use of smaller, regional or sub-regional units or two-tier districting), the use of differing electoral formulae for the allocation of seats and the use of thresholds.

#### **Single Transferable Vote (STV)**

The Single Transferable Vote system is essentially preferential voting (as in AV) in multi-member constituencies. Voters are able to rank as many candidates, both within parties and across different parties, as they wish in order of preference. Any of those candidates who reach a certain quota are deemed to have been elected. The surplus votes of candidates elected on the first count and the votes of those with fewest votes after subsequent counts are distributed on the basis of preferences to the remaining candidates until sufficient candidates reach the quota and are, as a result, elected.

#### **Mixed systems: the Additional Member System (AMS) and the AV top-up**

The title of mixed systems describes any system which combines a list system element together with a plurality or majoritarian single constituency system. Under an additional member system, voters cast two distinct votes — the first for a constituency MP and the second a party vote. The allocation of additional members then serves to correct the disproportionality which arises from the election of single constituency MPs. Under a parallel system, the two votes are independent of each other and the additional members exist to mitigate rather than correct any disproportionality in the return of constituency members.

## **National Unit Specification: statement of standards (cont)**

### **UNIT Political Representation (Higher)**

#### **Analysing and Evaluating election sources and data**

Examples of election figures from local, Scottish, UK, European and Presidential elections should be used with the candidates — these figures could be from any period since the intention is to build analytical and evaluation skills rather than a body of knowledge. It should be obvious that particular election years give results that pinpoint more clearly than others the advantages and disadvantages of particular systems eg 1951 and 1974 (both) UK Parliamentary elections or the 2000 American Presidential elections where Al Gore had more popular votes but fewer electoral college votes than George Bush. Using opinion polls taken before the elections and comparing these with actual results could be a useful statistical exercise which will help build analytical and evaluative skills.

In building skills there will clearly be an element of knowledge and understanding as candidates learn how to analyse and evaluate data and the criteria to use. Assessment marks though for Outcome 2 in the Unit will be based only on evidence cited from the sources used and not on underpinning or extended knowledge of the topics.