

National Unit Specification: general information

UNIT	Political Structures: An Introduction (Intermediate 1)
NUMBER	D390 10
COURSE	Politics (Intermediate 1)

SUMMARY

This is a mandatory component unit of Intermediate 1 Politics but it can also be offered as a free-standing unit.

It offers a basic introduction to political structures for post-16 candidates covering elementary knowledge and understanding of political executives and assemblies. It also introduces candidates to simple analysis and comparison of different judiciaries and encourages the development of basic analytical, interpretive and critical skills.

Successful candidates will have gained basic knowledge and understanding of a range of political structures which they can use to interpret and make judgements about political developments and events. By examining different political contexts they can make better sense of their world and interpret new information. They will be able to contribute to debates on political issues, recognise bias and appreciate alternative points of view.

The unit is designed to meet the needs of:

- candidates undertaking an Intermediate 1 course in Politics
- candidates undertaking a Scottish Group Award at Intermediate 1 or 2
- candidates who seek an introduction to political structures and who wish to undertake a free-standing unit in the subject

Administrative Information

Superclass:	EA
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National Unit Specification: general information (cont)

UNIT Political Structures: An Introduction (Intermediate 1)

OUTCOMES

- 1 Describe, in brief, a key function of a political executive.
- 2 Describe, in brief, a key function of political assemblies.
- 3 Analyse, at a basic level, the role of the judiciary in different political contexts.
- 4 Evaluate simple evidence and reach conclusions on an issue related to political structures.

RECOMMENDED ENTRY

Entry is at the discretion of the centre. However, it would be beneficial if candidates had achieved the following:

- a Standard Grade social subject at grade 5 or 6, or relevant Access units
- Standard Grade English at grade 6 or above Communication at Access 3
- any other relevant qualification at an appropriate level

CREDIT VALUE

1 credit at Intermediate 1.

CORE SKILLS

This unit gives automatic certification of the following:

Complete core skills for the unit	None
Core skills components for the unit	Critical Thinking Int 1

Additional information about core is published in *Automatic Certification of Core Skills in National Qualifications* (SQA, 1999).

National Unit Specification: statement of standards

UNIT Political Structures: An Introduction (Intermediate 1)

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

Describe, in brief, a key function of a political executive.

Performance criteria

- a) A key function of a political executive is described simply and correctly.
- b) The work of a political executive in different political contexts is described simply and correctly.

Evidence requirements

PC (a) simple written or oral description of one executive function from those listed below.

PC (b) simple written or oral description of the work of one political executive in two different political contexts.

Functions: choose **one** from making policy, mobilising support for policies, supervising the implementation of policy, ceremonial and crisis leadership.

Executives: choose from either presidential or parliamentary executives.

Political contexts: choose **two** from local, national or international contexts for the executive.

OUTCOME 2

Describe, in brief, a key function of political assemblies.

Performance criteria

- a) A key function of a political assembly is described simply and correctly.
- b) The work of a political assembly in different political contexts is described simply and correctly.

Evidence requirements

PC (a) simple written or oral description of one function from those listed below.

PC (b) simple written or oral description of the work of one political assembly from two different political contexts.

Functions: choose **one** from monitoring the executive, recruitment and control of political leaders, making and dismissing governments, representation, the passing of laws.

Political contexts: choose **two** from local, national or international contexts.

National Unit Specification: statement of standards (cont)

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OUTCOME 3

Analyse, at a basic level, the role of the judiciary in different political contexts.

Performance criteria

- a) The principle of an independent judiciary is described simply and correctly.
- b) The relationship between the judiciary and constitution in different states is described simply and correctly.
- c) The relationship between the judiciary and the state and its citizens in resolving conflict is described simply and correctly.

Note on the range of the outcome

The judiciary: the principle of judicial independence; how judges are selected in two different states; the resolution of disputes between the state and its citizens over basic liberties; ruling on whether specific laws are constitutional; resolving conflicts between different institutions or levels of government.

Evidence requirements

PC (a) simple written or oral description of the principle of an independent judiciary giving one example of how judges are selected in one state.

PC (b) simple written or oral description of the relationship between the judiciary and the constitution in two different states in terms of ruling on whether specific laws are constitutional.

PC (c) simple written or oral description of the role of the judiciary in the resolution of conflict between the state and its citizens over basic liberties. Two different political states should be used.

OUTCOME 4

Evaluate simple evidence and reach conclusions on an issue related to political structures.

Performance criteria

- a) Contrasting views on an issue related to political structures are identified correctly.
- b) Contrasting views on an issue related to political structures are described simply and correctly.
- c) Examples of bias are recognised and described simply and correctly.
- d) Conclusions reached are valid.

Evidence requirements

PC (a) simple written or oral identification of two contrasting views.

PC (b) simple written or oral description of two contrasting views.

PC (c) simple written or oral description of one example of bias.

PC (d) written or oral conclusions, which must be related to the points made in PC (b) and PC (c).

Political issues: choose **one** from written versus unwritten constitutions, presidential versus parliamentary democracy, unitary versus federal (devolved) government.

National Unit Specification: support notes

UNIT Political Structures: An Introduction (Intermediate 1)

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

This unit has the same content as Introduction to Political Structures (Int 2). However, the units are differentiated by outcomes, performance criteria and evidence requirements. It follows that in a bi-level class, while candidates will cover the same content, they will not be expected to master it in the same way, ie, to the same depth of knowledge and understanding or level of skill development.

This unit, like its Intermediate 2 partner offers an introduction to Politics and is set in the context of political structures. Full details of the content of this unit are set out in the course specification for Intermediate 1 Politics.

It is intended to introduce candidates to political structures and to encourage them where appropriate to relate their basic knowledge and understanding of these to their own experiences. Candidates will begin to appreciate that within society there are key political structures and institutions which can profoundly influence the shape and structure of that particular society and the rights and responsibilities of its citizens.

At this level, the introduction to political structures is achieved through the understanding of political executives, political assemblies and the role of the judiciary. By using a contextual and illustrative approach, candidates will explore for themselves the role and influence of various political institutions at an introductory level.

GUIDANCE ON LEARNING AND TEACHING APPROACHES FOR THIS UNIT

Proposals regarding approaches to learning and teaching are contained in the course specification for Intermediate 1 Politics, but for this unit particular emphasis should be placed on active learning methods and a candidate-centred approach. A good variety of resources is critical for this approach. These should be interesting, accessible and manageable and reflect the experiences of candidates working at this level.

The outcomes are interconnected and should be approached as such. It is recommended that, wherever possible, outcomes should be covered in an integrated way, eg, the study of the separation of power may be used as a context to explore the role of the executive, the legislature and the judiciary.

National Unit Specification: support notes (cont)

UNIT Political Structures: An Introduction (Intermediate 1)

GUIDANCE ON APPROACHES TO ASSESSMENT FOR THIS UNIT

Evidence of attainment of the outcomes in this unit may be provided by a variety of methods of assessment. Matching exercises, simple structured questions, short responses, assignments or a project may all be used. Where more open-ended assessments are used, candidates working at this level will require careful briefing and clear records must be maintained to note the achievement of outcomes. Account should be taken of the nature of the class group at this level in deciding which form of assessment should be adopted. Wherever possible, a holistic strategy should be used and an outcome by outcome approach avoided. However, where an integrated approach is used for assessment it will be necessary to identify where in the candidate's response each outcome has been met.

If the evidence is gathered by means of a single assessment towards the end of the unit, care should be taken to ensure that sufficient time is allowed for remediation and reassessment if required.

Where assessments are set which allow candidates to demonstrate performance beyond the minimum standard required, evidence gathered for internal unit assessment may also be used for grade prediction and for appeals for external course assessment. (For details of the grade descriptions for external assessment, refer to the Intermediate 1 Politics course details.)

SPECIAL NEEDS

This unit specification is intended to ensure that there are no artificial barriers to learning or assessment. Special 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 Special Assessment and Certification Arrangements for Candidates with Special Needs/Candidates whose First Language is not English* (SQA, 1998).