

## National Unit Specification: general information

**UNIT** Political Structures (Intermediate 2)

**CODE** DV4T 11

### SUMMARY

This Unit will enable candidates to gain an understanding of the political structures of the UK, Scotland and the European Union, concentrating on the legislative and executive branches of government.

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 another level in a Social Science this Unit provides the opportunity to study some familiar topics related to the UK in more depth.

The Unit is designed to meet the needs of:

- ◆ candidates who seek an introduction to Politics and who wish to undertake a free-standing Unit in the subject
- ◆ candidates who seek an introduction to Politics as preparation for studying Unit(s) and/or the Course in Higher Politics.

### OUTCOMES

- 1 Describe the legislative branch of government in Scotland, the UK and the European Union.
- 2 Evaluate the political executives of Scotland, the UK and the European Union.

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#### Administrative Information

**Superclass:** EA

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## National Unit Specification: general information (cont)

**UNIT** Political Structures (Intermediate 2)

### 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 General level or an equivalent Intermediate 1 Course or Units  
or
- ◆ Intermediate 1 or equivalent Units in a Social Science

**and** Standard Grade English at General level or Communication at Intermediate 1.

### CREDIT VALUE

1 credit at Intermediate 2 (6 SCQF credit points at SCQF level 5\*)

*\*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 Skill component	Critical Thinking at Intermediate 2 (SCQF level 5)

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

### **UNIT Political Structures (Intermediate 2)**

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 the legislative branch of government in Scotland, the UK and the European Union.

##### **Performance criteria**

- (a) The key features of the legislative branch of government are described clearly.
- (b) Examples of the operation of the legislative branch of government are described clearly.

#### **OUTCOME 2**

Evaluate the political executives of Scotland, the UK and the European Union.

##### **Performance criteria**

- (a) The structure of the executive in Scotland, the UK and the European Union is compared clearly.
- (b) The powers of the executive in Scotland, the UK and the European Union are explained clearly.

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

The content and context for this Unit is specified in Appendix One – Statement of Standards.

Evidence requirements apply to the Unit as a whole, and therefore, apply holistically to both 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 Structures (Intermediate 2)**

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**

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**

The focus for this Unit is the political structures of Scotland, the UK and the European Union. Clearly the UK's membership of the EU and devolution in Scotland have influenced political life in the UK considerably and created a number of fierce debates about sovereignty, policies and laws. This Unit will introduce candidates to the legislative and executive structures of Scotland, the UK and EU. The intergovernmentalism versus supranationalism issue may be a bit wordy at this level but it can be covered as the eurosceptics (those concerned about the extension of supranational authority in the EU and opposed to further integration) versus the pro-europeans (those supportive of further European integration and a leading role for the UK in the EU) debate. Comparing the structure and powers of the legislative and executive bodies in Scotland with those in the UK and the EU and exploring the conflicts that exist between them should be the main areas of study for candidates in this Unit.

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

Teachers/lecturers may devise their own assessment tasks while 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 and 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.

#### **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 Structures (Intermediate 2)**

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

**Content and Context**

**Legislatures** — the structure of the legislatures for Scotland, the UK and the EU are very different, as are the actual decision-makers — candidates should explore the unicameral, bicameral and tricameral models with their relative advantages and disadvantages; the nature of the committee system in Scotland, the UK and the EU (a powerful legislature needs a well developed committee structure which gives detailed consideration to legislative measures and financial proposals, scrutinises administration and expenditure and investigates matters of public concern).

Candidates should be introduced to and be aware of the important institutions involved in legislation — the Queen, the House of Commons and House of Lords in Westminster; the Holyrood Parliament in Edinburgh; The European Council, the Council of Ministers, the European Parliament and the European Commission.

The functions of a legislature include some or all of the following — monitoring of the executive; recruitment and control of political leaders; making and dismissing governments; representation; the passing of laws. These are useful guides to compare and contrast the functions of the legislatures of Scotland, UK and the EU.

**Executives** — how the executives are structured (who is included when we speak about the executive in Scotland, the UK and the EU); how are their powers distributed and what checks and balances on their powers exist; candidates should be able to describe these powers as well as compare and contrast them.