

National Unit Specification: general information

UNIT Political Representation (Intermediate 2)

CODE DV4V 11

SUMMARY

This Unit will focus on the issue of representation and the controversies that surround it. The role of political parties and pressure groups in this process is critical. By introducing the candidate to different types of electoral systems that are already used for major elections in the UK at local, Scottish, UK and European level, it will be possible to analyse and evaluate each of them in terms of their effectiveness. An introductory examination of alternative electoral systems will help the candidates understand the debate over electoral reform. 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. The topics chosen for study in this Unit are likely to be of relevance and interest to candidates personally and socially.

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 roles of political parties and pressure groups in the UK.
- 2 Evaluate electoral systems.

Administrative Information

Superclass: EA

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National Unit Specification: general information (cont)

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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 level (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

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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 the Scottish Qualifications Authority.

OUTCOME 1

Describe the roles of political parties and pressure groups in the UK.

Performance criteria

- (a) The roles of political parties and pressure groups in the UK are described clearly.
- (b) Examples of these roles from the UK are described clearly.

OUTCOME 2

Evaluate electoral systems.

Performance criteria

- (a) The strengths and weaknesses of the UK electoral systems are explained clearly.
- (b) The key features and outcomes of electoral systems used in the UK are evaluated clearly.

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 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 both outcomes. These will typically be produced in response to specific questions in an assessment comprising a mixture of short-answer, restricted response and 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 the use of 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 the SQA for prior moderation.

National Unit Specification: support notes

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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

This Unit explores the role of political parties and pressure groups in the UK electoral process, the different types of elections and the debate over electoral reform in the UK. This Unit will focus on the issue of representation and the controversies that surround it. There are useful links with the *Political Theory* Unit and the concepts of democracy and representation. The role of political parties and pressure groups in this process is critical. By introducing the candidate to different types of electoral systems that are already used for major elections in the UK at local, Scottish, UK and European level it will be possible to analyse and evaluate each of them in terms of their effectiveness. An introductory examination of alternative electoral systems will help the candidates understand the debate over electoral reform.

Candidates should be introduced to electoral data and given the opportunity to develop skills, including analysis and detecting bias and selectivity in source materials.

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 testing no longer 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).

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

Content and Context

Political Parties and Pressure Groups in the UK — functions of political parties eg electoral and governing roles; party system and the major parties in the UK; distinction between the aims and functions of pressure groups and parties; power and influence of pressure groups.

Elections and Electoral Systems — candidates should be aware of the functions of elections and the advantages and disadvantages of several types 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; rather than very detailed knowledge of each, it is more important that candidates understand those systems which are relevant to elections taking place in the UK and what the key points are in the debate over electoral reform in the UK; the Scottish parliamentary system can be covered here by way of comparison.

Electoral Data — candidates should be introduced to electoral data and given the opportunity to develop skills, including analysis and detecting bias and selectivity in source materials.