



Higher
Course Assessment
Specification



Higher Politics Course Assessment Specification (C758 76)

Valid from August 2014

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Please refer to the note of changes at the end of this Course Assessment Specification for details of changes from previous version (where applicable).

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Course outline

Course title:	Higher Politics
SCQF level:	level 6 (24 SCQF credit points)
Course code:	C758 76
Course assessment code:	X758 76

The purpose of the Course Assessment Specification is to ensure consistent and transparent assessment year on year. It describes the structure of the Course assessment and the mandatory skills, knowledge and understanding that will be assessed.

Course assessment structure

Component 1 — question paper	60 marks
Component 2 — assignment	30 marks
Total marks	90 marks

This Course includes six SCQF credit points to allow additional time for preparation for Course assessment. The Course assessment covers the added value of the Course.

Equality and inclusion

This Course Assessment Specification has been designed to ensure that there are no unnecessary barriers to assessment. Assessments have been designed to promote equal opportunities while maintaining the integrity of the qualification.

For guidance on assessment arrangements for disabled learners and/or those with additional support needs, please follow the link to the Assessment Arrangements web page: www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/14977.html.

Guidance on inclusive approaches to delivery and assessment of this Course is provided in the *Course/Unit Support Notes*.

Assessment

To gain the award of the Course, the learner must pass all of the Units as well as the Course assessment. Course assessment will provide the basis for grading attainment in the Course award.

Course assessment

SQA will produce and give instructions for the production and conduct of Course assessments based on the information provided in this document.

Added value

The purpose of the Course assessment is to assess added value of the Course as well as confirming attainment in the Course and providing a grade. The added value for the Course will address the key purposes and aims of the Course, as defined in the Course Rationale. It will do this by addressing one or more of breadth, challenge, or application.

In this Course assessment, added value will focus on the following:

- ◆ breadth — drawing on knowledge and skills from across the Course
- ◆ challenge — requiring greater depth or extension of knowledge and/or skills
- ◆ application — requiring application of knowledge and/or skills in practical or theoretical contexts as appropriate

This added value consists of:

- ◆ drawing on, extending and applying the skills, knowledge and understanding the learner has acquired during the Course. This will be assessed by a question paper and an assignment. Over the Course assessment there will be broad parity between the assessment of skills, knowledge and understanding
- ◆ demonstrating breadth of skills, knowledge and understanding from across the Units of the Course in the question paper. This will sample knowledge and understanding from across all three Units of the Course and will require the application of skills
- ◆ demonstrating challenge and application related to an appropriate political issue in the assignment

Grading

Course assessment will provide the basis for grading attainment in the Course award.

The Course assessment is graded A–D. The grade is determined on the basis of the total mark for all Course assessments together.

A learner's overall grade will be determined by their performance across the Course assessment.

Grade description for C

For the award of Grade C, learners will have demonstrated successful performance in all of the Units of the Course. In the Course assessment, learners will typically have demonstrated successful performance in relation to the mandatory skills, knowledge and understanding for the Course.

Grade description for A

For the award of Grade A, learners will have demonstrated successful performance in all of the Units of the Course. In the Course assessment, learners will typically have demonstrated a consistently high level of performance in relation to the mandatory skills, knowledge and understanding for the Course.

Credit

To take account of the extended range of learning and teaching approaches, remediation, consolidation of learning and integration needed for preparation for external assessment, six SCQF credit points are available in Courses at National 5 and Higher, and eight SCQF credit points in Courses at Advanced Higher. These points will be awarded when a Grade D or better is achieved.

Structure and coverage of the Course assessment

The Course assessment will consist of two Components, a question paper and an assignment.

Component 1 — question paper

The purpose of this question paper is to demonstrate application of skills and breadth of knowledge and understanding from across the three Units of the Course.

This question paper will give learners an opportunity to demonstrate the following skills, knowledge and understanding:

- ◆ comparing information about political theories and systems
- ◆ interpreting, evaluating and synthesising a wide range of electoral data
- ◆ explaining, analysing and evaluating complex political issues
- ◆ drawing on knowledge and understanding that is factual, theoretical and conceptual, and adopting a comparative approach where appropriate

The question paper will have 60 marks (approximately 66% of the total mark).

This question paper has three Sections.

Section 1, titled 'Political Theory', will have 20 marks. This Section will be made up of extended response questions requiring the learner to draw on the skills, knowledge and understanding acquired during the Course. Questions will draw on the skills, knowledge and understanding described in the further mandatory information on Course coverage.

Section 2, titled 'Political Systems', will have 20 marks. This Section will be made up of extended response questions requiring the learner to draw on the skills, knowledge and understanding acquired during the Course. Questions will draw on the skills, knowledge and understanding described in the further mandatory information on Course coverage.

Section 3, titled 'Political Parties and Elections', will have 20 marks. This Section will be made up of extended response questions requiring the learner to draw on the skills, knowledge and understanding acquired during the Course. Questions will draw on the skills, knowledge and understanding described in the further mandatory information on Course coverage.

Candidates will answer one question, worth 20 marks, assessing knowledge and understanding and higher order skills of analysis **and** evaluation. This question may be set in either Section 1 or 2 of the paper and candidates will have a choice of one question to answer from two.

Candidates will answer two questions, worth 12 marks each, assessing knowledge and understanding and higher order skills of analysis **or** evaluation. These questions may be set in any Section of the paper and candidates will have a choice of one question to answer from two in each Section.

Candidates will answer two source based, information handling skills questions, worth 8 marks each, assessing the skills of comparing and contrasting (Section 1 or 2) and interpreting, synthesising and evaluating electoral data (Section 3). Candidates will

have no choice of question. These questions will consist of between two and three sources of information at an appropriate level of detail and complexity for this SCQF level. Sources may be written, numerical, graphical or pictorial.

The question paper Component of the Course assessment will have a greater emphasis on the assessment of knowledge and understanding than the assignment. The other marks will be awarded for the demonstration of skills.

Component 2 — assignment

The purpose of this assignment is to demonstrate challenge and application by demonstrating skills, knowledge and understanding within the context of a political issue.

This assignment will give learners an opportunity to demonstrate the following skills, knowledge and understanding:

- ◆ identify a political issue that invites discussion and debate
- ◆ research a political issue using a range of sources of information
- ◆ show detailed factual and theoretical knowledge and understanding of a political issue
- ◆ refer to political sources
- ◆ analyse and synthesise information in a structured manner
- ◆ draw a detailed and reasoned conclusion, showing an awareness of different points of view
- ◆ communicate information

The assignment will have 30 marks (approximately 33% of the total mark).

The assignment Component of the Course assessment will have a greater emphasis on the assessment of skills than the question paper. The other marks will be awarded for the demonstration of knowledge and understanding.

Setting, conducting and marking of assessment

Question paper

This question paper will be set and marked by SQA, and conducted in centres under conditions specified for external examinations by SQA. Learners will complete this in 2 hours and 15 minutes.

Controlled assessment — assignment

This assignment is:

- ◆ set by centres within SQA guidelines
- ◆ conducted under a high level of supervision and control

Evidence will be submitted to SQA for external marking.

All marking will be quality assured by SQA.

Setting the assessment

Set by centres within SQA guidelines.

Conducting the assessment

Conducted under a high level of supervision and control.

Learners will have an open choice of issue to be researched.

The production of evidence for assessment will be conducted:

- ◆ within 1 hour and 30 minutes
- ◆ with the use of specified resources
- ◆ in time to meet a submission date set by SQA
- ◆ independently by the learner
- ◆ when the learner is ready

Further mandatory information on Course coverage

The following gives details of mandatory skills, knowledge and understanding for the Higher Politics Course. Course assessment will involve sampling the knowledge and understanding.

Component 1: question paper

In the question paper, candidates will demonstrate skills of giving detailed explanations, analysis and evaluation of complex issues as well as the specific Politics skills of:

- ◆ comparing information about political theories and political systems
- ◆ interpreting, evaluating and synthesising a wide range of electoral data

Options exist in each Section to allow opportunities for personalisation and choice. The information on mandatory skills, knowledge and understanding below should not be seen as a recommended teaching order or as a guide to teaching and learning approaches. The question paper will sample from knowledge and understanding below and require learners to apply skills but this should not be seen as a guide to the format of the question paper.

Political Theory

Learners will study the nature of Power, Authority and Legitimacy referring to the ideas of Steven Lukes and Max Weber.

Learners will study the nature of democracy and will be able to identify the arguments for and against Direct and Representative (indirect) forms of democracy. Learners will be able to refer to a relevant theorist such as Plato, Schumpeter or Dahl.

Learners will study two political ideologies from the list below. Learners must refer to the ideas of political theorists relevant to each ideology.

- ◆ Liberalism
- ◆ Socialism
- ◆ Conservatism
- ◆ Nationalism
- ◆ Fascism

Political Systems

Learners will study two political systems from the list below:

- ◆ Scottish political system
- ◆ UK political system
- ◆ European political system
- ◆ US political system

Learners will study aspects of the political systems as follows:

- ◆ the nature and status of different constitutional arrangements
- ◆ the advantages and disadvantages of respective legislatures in terms of democratic decision-making, passage of legislation, scrutiny of legislation and government policies

- ◆ political executives; differences in the distribution of power and how the executive relates to other branches of government
- ◆ the role of the judiciary and its independence within comparative political systems

Political Parties and Elections

Learners will study the impact of the dominant ideas within a UK political party on its electoral performance. Learners will study a political party from the list below:

- ◆ Conservative Party
- ◆ Labour Party
- ◆ Liberal Democrats
- ◆ Scottish National Party

Learners will study aspects of the following:

- ◆ the dominant ideas of the political party studied and the impact of these ideas on the electoral performance of the political party
- ◆ the impact of a range of factors on the electoral performance of the political party
- ◆ the application of theoretical analyses of voting behaviour

Relevant case studies should be used from Scotland, the United Kingdom or both Scotland and the United Kingdom.

The dominant ideas within a party include ideas within the party's traditions, its ideological perspective and key ideas given prominence in an electoral campaign. Learners may focus on where and how a party chooses to position itself within the political spectrum in order to maximise its electoral performance.

Learners will study the impact of a range of factors on electoral performance such as:

- ◆ traditional campaign strategies, for example canvassing, leafleting and the 'ground game'
- ◆ political campaign management strategies
- ◆ media strategies, including television, newspapers, radio and new media
- ◆ the use of technology

Learners will study the application of theoretical analyses of voting behaviour. Theories of voting behaviour should include the rational choice model, the dominant ideology model, the sociological model and the party identification model.

Learners will evaluate a wide range of electoral data, which may include local and national election results, opinion polls, focus group evidence, party canvass returns and exit poll data.

Relevant case studies should be used from Scotland, the United Kingdom or both Scotland and the United Kingdom.

Component 2: assignment

Candidates have an open choice of political issue. Their choice is not constrained by the mandatory content of Component 1: question paper. The specific political skill assessed in this Component is:

- ◆ drawing detailed and reasoned conclusions, showing an awareness of different points of view about a political issue

Administrative information

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History of changes to Course Assessment Specification

Version	Description of change	Authorised by	Date
1.1	Removed 'topic and' in relation to the assignment. Clarified skills assessed in the question paper. Revised fourth bullet point in description of assignment to state: 'refer to political sources'. Included 'Democracy' context in Political Theory; clarified descriptions of 'Course coverage' in all three Sections.	Qualifications Development Manager	April 2014
1.2	Minor changes to what learners will study in the Political Systems section and the Political Parties and Elections section within the 'Further mandatory information on Course coverage'.	Qualifications Manager	April 2015

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