Higher Politics

Course code:	C858 76
Course assessment code:	X858 76
SCQF:	level 6 (24 SCQF credit points)
Valid from:	session 2018–19

This document provides detailed information about the course and course assessment to ensure consistent and transparent assessment year on year. It describes the structure of the course and the course assessment in terms of the skills, knowledge and understanding that are assessed.

This document is for teachers and lecturers and contains all the mandatory information you need to deliver the course.

Contents

Course overview

The course consists of 24 SCQF credit points which includes time for preparation for course assessment. The notional length of time for candidates to complete the course is 160 hours.

The course assessment has three components.

Component	Marks	Duration
Component 1: question paper 1	52	1 hour and 45 minutes
Component 2: question paper 2	28	1 hour and 15 minutes
Component 3: assignment	30	1 hour and 30 minutes — see 'Course assessment' section

Recommended entry	Progression
Entry to this course is at the discretion of the centre. Candidates should have achieved a National 5 social subjects or social science course or equivalent qualifications and/or experience prior to starting this course.	♦ Advanced Higher Modern Studies course ♦ further study, employment and/or training

Conditions of award

The grade awarded is based on the total marks achieved across all course assessment components.

Course rationale

National Courses reflect Curriculum for Excellence values, purposes and principles. They offer flexibility, provide time for learning, focus on skills and applying learning, and provide scope for personalisation and choice.

Every course provides opportunities for candidates to develop breadth, challenge and application. The focus and balance of assessment is tailored to each subject area.

This course builds upon the principles and practices of the social studies curriculum area. Candidates have opportunities to develop important attitudes, such as respect for the values, beliefs and cultures of others; openness to new thinking and ideas; and a sense of responsibility and global citizenship.

The course contributes to candidates' understanding of society by helping them to develop an understanding of political theory, political systems in the UK and international contexts, and factors affecting the electoral performance of political parties. Candidates develop a critical awareness of the nature of politics and the relationship between political theories, systems and parties.

Candidates build up a framework of political knowledge and understanding through interpreting, evaluating and commenting on political issues. They develop higher-order thinking skills through research and critical-thinking activities carried out individually and in groups. This develops attributes that are important for life and work. Candidates progressively develop skills in literacy and numeracy.

Purpose and aims

Politics makes a distinctive contribution to the curriculum through its study of important political concepts and ideologies, the comparison of different political systems, and the evaluation of factors that impact on the electoral performance of political parties.

Candidates develop knowledge and understanding of key political concepts. The theoretical perspective of the course enables candidates to identify, explore and analyse political issues in order to develop their own views and perspectives. Candidates develop analysing and evaluating skills during the course which help them to interpret and understand political issues.

Candidates develop:

♦ knowledge and understanding of:
— significant political concepts and ideologies
— political systems through comparative study
— political parties and elections
♦ the ability to analyse and evaluate political ideas, events, issues, systems, parties and electoral performance
♦ a range of research, data-handling and evaluating skills

Who is this course for?

The course is appropriate for a range of candidates, from those who wish to achieve a greater understanding of politics in order to engage as active and informed members of society, to those who wish to progress to more specialised training or higher education or employment.

Course content

The course consists of three areas of study: Political theory, Political systems, and Political parties and elections. There is considerable flexibility in the contexts that can be studied within each area to allow for personalisation and choice.

Skills, knowledge and understanding

Skills, knowledge and understanding for the course

The following provides a broad overview of the subject skills, knowledge and understanding developed in the course:

♦ researching, analysing, evaluating and synthesising information from a wide range of political sources

♦ using a wide range of sources of information to draw detailed and balanced conclusions about political concepts and ideologies

♦ comparing and contrasting different political systems, making generalisations, where appropriate, on the political process

♦ interpreting and evaluating a wide range of electoral data

♦ drawing on factual and conceptual knowledge of political theory, political systems, and political parties and elections

Skills, knowledge and understanding for the course assessment

The following provides details of skills, knowledge and understanding sampled in the course assessment:

Question paper 1

This question paper has three sections: Political theory, Political systems, and Political parties and elections. Candidates demonstrate the application of skills and breadth of knowledge and understanding from across the three sections of the course. This question paper samples from the knowledge and understanding as follows:

Section 1: Political theory
Candidates study the key political concepts of power, authority and legitimacy, with particular reference to the work of Steven Lukes and Max Weber, and analyse the relevance of these concepts today. They study the nature of democracy and the arguments for and against direct and representative democracy, including the works of relevant theorists. Candidates study the key ideas of two political ideologies (from Liberalism, Conservatism, Socialism, Nationalism, and Fascism) including the works of relevant theorists, and draw balanced conclusions about the chosen ideologies. Relevant case studies are used from either local, national or international contexts, as well as different historical contexts.
Skills, knowledge and understanding
Power, authority and legitimacy
Power: ♦ different definitions of power ♦ the conflict view of power and differing interpretations of how power is distributed in society ♦ Steven Lukes' 'three faces of power': decision making, non-decision making and manipulating desires Authority: ♦ authority as rightful power which implies an obligation to obey ♦ Max Weber's three types of authority: traditional, charismatic and legal-rational Legitimacy: ♦ the sense of rightfulness ♦ the relevance of Max Weber's classifications ♦ the ways in which legitimacy may be enabled ♦ the impact on a political system of the loss of legitimacy
Democracy
Direct and representative democracy: ♦ the nature of democracy and different forms of democracy ♦ arguments for and against direct democracy ♦ arguments for and against representative democracy ♦ theorists, for example: Plato, Schumpeter or Dahl
Key political ideologies
Liberalism: ♦ theorists, for example: Locke, Mill ♦ key ideas, for example: rationalism, individualism, toleration, consent, freedom, rights Conservatism: ♦ theorists, for example: Burke, Disraeli ♦ key ideas, for example: human imperfection, tradition, security, authority, organic society, private property

Socialism:
- ♦ theorists, for example: Marx, Lenin
- ♦ key ideas, for example: co-operation, collectivism, equality, class, common ownership

Nationalism:
- ♦ theorists, for example: Mazzini, Herder
- ♦ key ideas, for example: the nation, self-determination, organic community, patriotism, identity

Fascism:
- ♦ theorists, for example: Mussolini, Hitler
- ♦ key ideas, for example: irrationalism, ultra-nationalism, racialism, authoritarian leadership, organicism

Section 2: Political systems
Candidates study the constitutional arrangements in different political systems. The detailed study of the political systems focuses on the roles of the executive and legislative branches within each system. Candidates compare and contrast the respective powers of individual branches of government within the two political systems, and draw balanced conclusions about these. Candidates study two of the following four political systems: the UK political system; the Scottish political system; the political system of the United States of America; or the European Union political system. Candidates take a comparative approach which reaches conclusions about the sources of power within two political systems.
Skills, knowledge and understanding
Constitutional arrangements
Candidates compare the nature and status of the different constitutional approaches within two chosen systems, including: ♦ the type and nature of the constitutional approach ♦ the origins and development of the constitutional arrangements ♦ key underlying principles ♦ the flexibility and adaptability in each system ♦ the position of the judiciary ♦ the role of the constitution in safeguarding individual rights
The legislative branch
Candidates compare the influence of the legislative branch within two chosen systems, including: ♦ the passage of legislation ♦ the ability to scrutinise the actions of government ♦ the role of committees
The executive branch
Candidates compare the influence of the executive branch within two chosen systems, including: ♦ the distribution of power ♦ the policy-making function ♦ the relationship between the executive and other branches of government

Section 3: Political parties and elections
Candidates compare the electoral impact of two different dominant ideas. This can **either** be from within one political party **or** between two different political parties. Candidates can choose from the following: the Conservative Party, Labour Party, Liberal Democrats or Scottish National Party. These ideas are studied alongside the impact of political campaign management strategies and theoretical analyses of voting behaviour.
Relevant case studies are used from Scotland, the United Kingdom, or both Scotland and the United Kingdom.
Skills, knowledge and understanding
The dominant ideas within or between political parties
Conservative, for example:
♦ one-nation conservatism
♦ Thatcherism
Labour, for example:
♦ democratic socialism
♦ new Labour
Liberal Democrat, for example:
♦ social liberalism
♦ *The Orange Book*
Scottish National Party, for example:
♦ civic nationalism
♦ left-of-centre social democratic
The impact of political campaign management strategies
Candidates analyse, evaluate and compare the effectiveness of the following:
♦ traditional grassroots campaign strategies
♦ media strategies
♦ use of new technology
Theories of voting behaviour
Candidates analyse, evaluate and compare the effectiveness of the following:
♦ rational choice model
♦ sociological model
♦ party identification model

Question paper 2

This question paper assesses the skills of comparing and contrasting information and interpreting, synthesising and evaluating a wide range of electoral data.

Assignment

Candidates choose any political topic or question to research. Their choice is not constrained by the content of question paper 1.

Skills, knowledge and understanding included in the course are appropriate to the SCQF level of the course. The SCQF level descriptors give further information on characteristics and expected performance at each SCQF level, and can be found on the SCQF website.

Skills for learning, skills for life and skills for work

This course helps candidates to develop broad, generic skills. These skills are based on SQA's Skills Framework: Skills for Learning, Skills for Life and Skills for Work and draw from the following main skills areas:

1   Literacy

1.1   Reading

1.2   Writing

2   Numeracy

2.3   Information handling

4   Employability, enterprise and citizenship

4.6   Citizenship

5   Thinking skills

5.3   Applying

5.4   Analysing and evaluating

Teachers and lecturers must build these skills into the course at an appropriate level, where there are suitable opportunities.

Course assessment

Course assessment is based on the information provided in this document.

The course assessment meets the key purposes and aims of the course by addressing:

♦ 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 enables candidates to draw on, extend and apply the skills, knowledge and understanding they have acquired during the course.

Course assessment structure: question paper

Question paper 1   52 marks

This question paper has a total mark allocation of 52 marks. This is 47% of the overall marks for the course assessment.

This question paper enables candidates to demonstrate the following skills, knowledge and understanding:

♦ drawing on knowledge and understanding that is factual, theoretical and conceptual, and adopting a comparative approach where appropriate
♦ explaining, analysing and evaluating complex political issues
♦ drawing detailed and balanced conclusions about complex political issues
♦ comparing information about political theories, systems and parties

In this question paper, candidates answer two 20-mark extended-response questions and one 12-mark extended-response question. The question paper has three sections:

Section 1: Political theory
Section 2: Political systems
Section 3: Political parties and elections

Each of these sections is worth either 12 or 20 marks and requires candidates to draw on the skills, knowledge and understanding acquired during the course. Candidates answer one extended-response question in each section, from a choice of two.

Setting, conducting and marking the question paper

This question paper is set and marked by SQA, and conducted in centres under conditions specified for external examinations by SQA.

Candidates have 1 hour and 45 minutes to complete this question paper.

Question paper 2   28 marks

This question paper has a total mark allocation of 28 marks. This is 26% of the overall marks for the course assessment.

This question paper enables candidates to demonstrate the following skills:

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

In this question paper, candidates answer two source-based, information-handling skills questions. One question is worth 8 marks and consists of two sources, and one question is worth 20 marks and consists of up to seven sources. Sources may be written, numerical, graphical or pictorial.

Setting, conducting and marking the question paper

This question paper is set and marked by SQA, and conducted in centres under conditions specified for external examinations by SQA.

Candidates have 1 hour and 15 minutes to complete this question paper.

Specimen question papers for Higher courses are published on SQA's website. These illustrate the standard, structure and requirements of the question papers candidates sit. The specimen papers also include marking instructions.

Course assessment structure: assignment

Assignment   30 marks

The assignment has a total mark allocation of 30 marks. This is 27% of the overall marks for the course assessment.

Assignment overview

The assignment allows candidates to demonstrate the following skills, knowledge and understanding:

♦   identifying a political issue that invites discussion and debate
♦   researching a political issue using a range of sources of information
♦   showing detailed factual and theoretical knowledge and understanding of a political issue
♦   referring to political sources
♦   analysing and synthesising information in a structured manner
♦   drawing a detailed and reasoned conclusion, showing an awareness of different points of view

Setting, conducting and marking the assignment

The assignment is set by teachers and lecturers within SQA guidelines. SQA provides a brief detailing how candidate evidence is assessed. Candidates choose any political topic or question to research. Evidence is submitted to SQA for external marking. All marking is quality assured by SQA.

The assignment has two stages:

♦ research
♦ production of evidence

Candidates undertake the research stage at any appropriate point in the course, normally when they have developed the necessary skills, knowledge and understanding.

In the research stage, candidates choose a topic which allows them to analyse and evaluate a political issue which invites discussion and debate. They research the issue, and organise their findings to address it, using the Politics resource sheet to collate their evidence and references.

Assessment conditions

Time

The research stage is designed to be completed over a notional period of 8 hours. Candidates have 1 hour and 30 minutes to complete the production of evidence for assessment. This must be done in one sitting. Candidates complete the production of evidence stage in time to meet the submission date set by SQA.

Supervision, control and authentication

The research stage is conducted under some supervision and control. This means that, although candidates may complete part of the work outwith the learning and teaching setting, teachers and lecturers should put in place processes to monitor progress and ensure that the work is the candidate's own, and that plagiarism has not taken place. For example:

♦ interim progress meetings with candidates
♦ questioning
♦ candidate's record of activity/progress
♦ teacher or lecturer observation

Group work approaches are acceptable as part of the research stage. However, there must be clear evidence for each candidate to show that they have met the evidence requirements.

The production of evidence stage is conducted under a high degree of supervision and control. This means that candidates must:

♦ be in direct sight of the teacher or lecturer or other responsible person during the assessment
♦ not communicate with each other
♦ have access only to the Politics resource sheet

Resources

During the research stage, there are no restrictions on the resources to which candidates may have access.

During the production of evidence stage, candidates have access only to the Politics resource sheet. The purpose of the resource sheet is to help candidates use their evidence and references, collected during the research stage, to address their chosen topic or question. Resource sheets are not assessed but must be submitted to SQA with candidates' assignments.

Reasonable assistance

Teachers and lecturers must exercise their professional responsibility to ensure that evidence submitted by a candidate is the candidate's own work.

The term 'reasonable assistance' is used to try to balance the need for support with the need to avoid giving too much assistance. If a candidate requires more than what is thought to be 'reasonable assistance', they may not be ready for assessment, or they may have been entered for the wrong level of qualification.

Reasonable assistance may be given on a generic basis to a class or group of candidates, for example, advice on how to develop a project plan. It may also be given to candidates on an individual basis. When reasonable assistance is given on a one-to-one basis in the context of something that a candidate has already produced or demonstrated, there is a danger that it becomes support for assessment, and teachers and lecturers need to be aware that this may be going beyond reasonable assistance.

Candidates must work on their research with minimum support from teachers or lecturers. In the research stage, reasonable assistance may include:

♦ directing candidates to the instructions for candidates
♦ clarifying instructions/requirements of the task
♦ advising candidates on the choice of topic or question
♦ guiding candidates on the likely availability and accessibility of resources for their chosen topic or question
♦ advising candidates on possible sources of information
♦ arranging visits to enable gathering of evidence
♦ interim progress checks

Candidates must complete the production of evidence independently. However, reasonable assistance may be provided prior to the production of evidence taking place. This may include advising candidates of the nature and volume of specified resources which may be used to support the production of evidence.

At any stage, reasonable assistance does not include:

♦ providing the topic or question for the candidate
♦ directing candidates to specific resources to be used
♦ providing model answers
♦ providing detailed feedback on drafts, including marking

Evidence to be gathered

The following evidence is required for this assessment:

♦ candidate assignment evidence
♦ Politics resource sheet: this must be a single-side of A4 paper and must contain no more than 250 words

Volume

There is no word count for the assignment. The resource sheet must contain no more than 250 words.

Grading

Candidates' overall grades are determined by their performance across the course assessment. The course assessment is graded A–D on the basis of the total mark for all course assessment components.

Grade description for C

For the award of grade C, candidates will typically have demonstrated successful performance in relation to the skills, knowledge and understanding for the course.

Grade description for A

For the award of grade A, candidates will typically have demonstrated a consistently high level of performance in relation to the skills, knowledge and understanding for the course.

Equality and inclusion

This course is designed to be as fair and as accessible as possible with no unnecessary barriers to learning or assessment.

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

Further information

The following reference documents provide useful information and background.

♦ [Higher Politics subject page](#)
♦ [Assessment arrangements web page](#)
♦ [Building the Curriculum 3–5](#)
♦ [Guide to Assessment](#)
♦ [Guidance on conditions of assessment for coursework](#)
♦ [SQA Skills Framework: Skills for Learning, Skills for Life and Skills for Work](#)
♦ [Coursework Authenticity: A Guide for Teachers and Lecturers](#)
♦ [Educational Research Reports](#)
♦ [SQA Guidelines on e-assessment for Schools](#)
♦ [SQA e-assessment web page](#)

The SCQF framework, level descriptors and handbook are available on the SCQF website.

Administrative information

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History of changes

Version	Description of change	Date

Note: you are advised to check SQA's website to ensure you are using the most up-to-date version of this document.