



Higher
coursework
assessment task



Higher Politics, SCQF Level 6

Assignment

Assessment task

This document provides information for teachers and lecturers about the coursework component of this course in terms of the skills, knowledge and understanding that are assessed. It **must** be read in conjunction with the course specification.

Valid from session 2026-27 and until further notice.

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Contents

Introduction	1
Instructions for teachers and lecturers	2
Marking instructions	3
Instructions for candidates	10

Introduction

This document contains instructions for teachers and lecturers, marking instructions, and instructions for candidates for the Higher Politics assignment. You must read it in conjunction with the course specification.

This assignment is worth 30 marks. This is 27% of the overall marks for the course assessment.

This is one of three course assessment components. The other components are question papers.

Instructions for teachers and lecturers

Specified resources to be taken into assessment

During the production of evidence stage, candidates should only have access to their Politics resource sheet. The resource sheet must be submitted to Qualifications Scotland with the evidence produced during the production of evidence stage. This resource sheet must consist of no more than a single side of A4 paper and should be no more than 250 words.

The Politics resource sheet taken into the production of evidence stage may include, for example:

- ◆ evidence or data from primary or secondary research
- ◆ bullet points or headings
- ◆ mind maps
- ◆ statistical, graphical or numerical data
- ◆ survey results
- ◆ interview questions and/or answers
- ◆ questionnaires and/or results
- ◆ list of internet search-engine results
- ◆ newspaper articles or extracts
- ◆ summary notes or quotes from sources
- ◆ extracts from books
- ◆ summary notes taken from a visit, talk, or a written or audio-visual source

The purpose of the resource sheet is to help candidates use the information and references, collected during their research stage, to address their chosen topic or question. Candidates must demonstrate their skills, knowledge and understanding of a political issue under controlled assessment conditions.

If a candidate does not submit a resource sheet, a penalty of 6 marks out of the total of 30 marks is applied.

Marking instructions

In line with Qualifications Scotland's normal practice, the following marking instructions for the Higher Politics assignment are addressed to the marker. They are also helpful for those preparing candidates for course assessment.

Candidates' evidence is submitted to Qualifications Scotland for external marking.

General marking principles

Always apply these general principles. Use them in conjunction with the detailed marking instructions, which identify the key features required in candidates' responses.

- a Always use positive marking. This means candidates accumulate marks for the demonstration of relevant skills, knowledge and understanding; marks are not deducted for errors or omissions.
- b If a candidate response does not seem to be covered by either the principles or detailed marking instructions, and you are uncertain how to assess it, you must seek guidance from your team leader.
- c Do not award marks for any information which is simply copied from the Politics resource sheet, and not used to demonstrate skills, knowledge and understanding. Candidates may copy quotations in full. Do not mark the resource sheet. However, it may help to clarify points which the candidate has made in their assignment, and may allow you to gain an insight into what they intended.
- d In order to access all the available marks, candidates must refer to political sources included in their resource sheet to support their skills, knowledge and understanding.

Detailed marking instructions

Marking instructions	Max mark	Additional guidance
A Identifying and demonstrating factual and theoretical knowledge and understanding of the issue, showing an awareness of different points of view	10	Candidates can gain marks in a number of ways up to a maximum of 10 marks. Award knowledge and understanding marks where points are: ◆ relevant to the issue candidates have chosen ◆ developed (by providing additional detail, exemplification, reasons or evidence) ◆ used to respond to the demands of the task Award marks where candidates have: ◆ identified an appropriate issue about which there are different points of view ◆ explained the background to the issue ◆ explained the issue with depth and clarity ◆ explained at least two points of view on the issue ◆ explained why the issue is important or what political concepts it relates to Candidates are likely to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of the issue, and the different points of view, in an extended introduction; however they can also demonstrate knowledge and understanding both in an introductory section and in support of their analysis, throughout their assignment. Award marks for relevant knowledge and understanding wherever it appears in the assignment.

Marking instructions	Max mark	Additional guidance
B Analysing information in a structured manner	14	Candidates can gain marks in a number of ways up to a maximum of 14 marks. Award marks depending on: ◆ level of detail ◆ quality of analysis ◆ consideration of a range of alternative views Analysis involves identifying parts, the relationship between them, and their relationships with the whole. It can also involve drawing out and relating implications. Award 1 mark for each analytical statement which analyses the issue. Award a maximum of 2 marks for an analytical statement which is developed further or has additional supporting justification or evidence. Award a maximum of 10 marks for analytical statements. Award a maximum of 14 marks where a number of analytical statements are made with supporting justification or evidence. Award analysis marks where candidates use their knowledge and understanding and/or a source to identify relevant components (for example, of an idea, theory or argument) and clearly show at least one of the following: ◆ links between different components ◆ links between component(s) and the whole ◆ links between component(s) and related concepts ◆ similarities and contradictions ◆ consistency and inconsistency ◆ different views and/or interpretations ◆ possible consequences and/or implications ◆ the relative importance of components ◆ understanding of underlying order or structure

Marking instructions	Max mark	Additional guidance
C Communicating information from, and referring to, political sources	2	Candidates can gain marks in a number of ways up to a maximum of 2 marks. Candidates may refer to, for example: ◆ views, writings, or work of relevant theorists ◆ views of political commentators ◆ evidence produced by research bodies ◆ views, policies or manifestos of political parties ◆ electoral data ◆ constitutional and other official documents Candidates may refer to political sources at any point in their assignment. Award marks where candidates communicate information contained within the sources to support their analysis of the issue or the different viewpoints. Award marks for communicating information from the sources based on: ◆ clarity of expression ◆ consistency, coherence and logic of argument leading to conclusion(s) ◆ use of appropriate political science terminology ◆ synthesis of information

Marking instructions	Max mark	Additional guidance
D Drawing a detailed and reasoned conclusion(s) about the issue	4	Candidates can gain marks in a number of ways up to a maximum of 4 marks. Candidates may come to an overall conclusion at the end of their assignment or may provide a series of conclusions throughout. Their conclusion should involve a judgement about the issue. Award marks based on: ♦ the extent to which there is a judgement(s) about the issue ♦ the extent to which the conclusion(s) addresses the issue ♦ the extent to which the conclusion(s) is supported by evidence ♦ consideration of different viewpoints

Note: the overview of marking instructions grid provides further clarification on the allocation of marks.

Overview of marking instructions

	0 marks	1 mark	2 marks	3 marks	4 marks	5 marks
Identifying and demonstrating factual and theoretical knowledge and understanding of the issue, showing an awareness of different points of view Award up to a maximum of 10 marks: - award up to 5 marks for background and framing of issue and alternatives - award a further 5 marks for knowledge and understanding which supports the analysis of the issue	No appropriate issue identified. No explanation of issue, background or significance of issue.	Issue is identified clearly.	Background to issue is explained.	Background to issue is explained in detail.	An awareness of several points of view on the issue is demonstrated.	Significance of issue is explained. Or The link between the issue and relevant political concepts is explained.
	No knowledge or understanding used in support of analysis.	Knowledge and understanding of the issue is used to support the analysis. Award up to 5 marks depending on: - the level of detail given - the development of knowledge based on the degree of exemplification and/or explanations - the range of information used to support different aspects of the analysis - explanation of political concepts and/or reference to political theorists, if appropriate				
Analysing information in a structured manner Award up to 14 marks	Unable to identify different aspects of issue.	Award 1 mark for each analytical statement which analyses the issue. Award a maximum of 10 marks for analytical statements alone. Award a maximum of 2 marks for an analytical statement which is developed further or has additional supporting justification or evidence. Candidates must include supporting justification or evidence to relevant analytical statements to gain up to 14 marks.				
Communicating information from, and referring to, political sources Award up to 2 marks	No reference to political sources.	Clear and accurate communication of, and reference to, one political source.	Clear and accurate communication of, and reference to, at least two political sources.			

	0 marks	1 mark	2 marks	3 marks	4 marks	5 marks
Drawing a detailed and reasoned conclusion(s) about the issue Award up to 4 marks	No conclusions drawn.	One conclusion is made with some reference to evidence.	One conclusion is made with detailed reference to evidence. Or Two conclusions are made with some reference to evidence.	One sophisticated and insightful conclusion is made with detailed reference to evidence. Or Three conclusions are made with reference to evidence.	One sophisticated and insightful conclusion is made with detailed reference to evidence and evaluating different points of view. Or Two or more conclusions are made with detailed reference to evidence.	

Instructions for candidates

This assessment applies to the assignment for Higher Politics.

This assignment is worth 30 marks. This is 27% of the overall marks for the course assessment.

It assesses 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
- ◆ communicating information from, and 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

When doing your research and when producing your evidence, you can demonstrate these skills in any way that you think makes sense for the issue you have chosen. You do not need to demonstrate them in any set order.

The assignment has two stages:

- ◆ research
- ◆ production of evidence: writing up your findings (under supervision, within 1 hour and 30 minutes, and in one sitting)

Your teacher or lecturer will let you know if there are any specific conditions for doing this assessment.

In the research stage you should choose a topic which allows you to research and draw conclusions about a political issue. This may be related to areas you have studied in class, or you may choose to research any appropriate political issue.

In the research stage you complete the Politics resource sheet to help you during the next stage – writing up your findings. Your resource sheet must consist of a single side of A4 paper and must have no more than 250 words.

You will not gain any marks for information that is simply copied from your Politics resource sheet and not used to demonstrate your skills, knowledge and understanding. However, it is acceptable to copy quotations in full.

Your resource sheet must be submitted with your assignment to Qualifications Scotland. The resource sheet is not marked. If you do not submit a resource sheet, you will lose 6 marks.

Working with others

While you should choose your own issue to research, others in your class may have chosen a similar issue. You might want to work with others for part of the time, when you are collecting information.

If you choose to do this, it is important that you are able to show what you have contributed to this part of your assignment, and that the information on the resource sheet is your own work.

In this assessment you will:	How you can do this
♦ identify a political issue that invites discussion and debate	You should choose a political issue that allows you to: ♦ carry out research on the issue ♦ show your knowledge and understanding of the issue ♦ use your skills to analyse the issue ♦ draw a conclusion(s) about the issue You can choose any political issue. You can research further something you have studied in class, or an issue you are interested in finding out more about. The issue you choose must be one about which there are different views that you can consider and reach a conclusion(s). You must have a clear understanding of the background to the issue you are going to research, in order to focus your research. This can include: ♦ a clear description of the issue ♦ an understanding of the different views on the issue ♦ why this is an important issue or what political concepts it relates to ♦ questions or aims which will help you to focus your research by finding answers Your teacher or lecturer may support you by commenting on the suitability of the issue you have chosen and providing advice on the likely availability of resources.

In this assessment you will:	How you can do this
♦ research a political issue, using a range of sources of information	You must collect information from at least two different sources. Some sources will be more useful and relevant than others, and you will get a variety of different viewpoints from different sources. You should plan where you are likely to find the most suitable sources for your particular issue. You must consider evidence supporting different viewpoints, and look at the issue in a balanced way. Your research methods can include: ♦ primary research where the evidence you collect is original to you ♦ secondary research where the information you use has been produced by someone else Whichever type of evidence you collect, you may find it helpful to keep a note of the source of the information and how useful the information is. Your research methods could include: ♦ carrying out interviews ♦ conducting surveys or questionnaires ♦ sending letters or emails ♦ reading official reports or research from think-tanks or pressure groups ♦ internet searches ♦ searching libraries for newspapers, magazines and books (print or electronic) ♦ making notes from political party manifestos, constitutional documents, the writings of political theorists or commentators ♦ going on visits or field trips ♦ taking notes on television programmes, videos, DVDs, digital streaming radio or podcasts

In this assessment you will:	How you can do this
♦ show detailed factual and theoretical knowledge and understanding of a political issue	In your assignment you must: ♦ describe the background to the issue ♦ show why it is an important or significant issue or explain the link to relevant political concepts ♦ explain different viewpoints on the issue To achieve full marks for knowledge and understanding, you need to use your knowledge to support your analysis of the issue.
♦ refer to political sources	You must collect information from at least two different political sources, and refer to them when writing your assignment. You must note the sources you have gathered information from during your assignment on your Politics resource sheet. You must refer to these when writing your assignment, to support the points you are making.
♦ analyse information in a structured manner	You have to collect a range of information on your issue, from at least two different sources, which show at least two different views on the issue. You can use this information by: ♦ selecting the most important information to address the issue you are researching ♦ deciding which is the most relevant and useful information ♦ combining information from different sources to make a stronger argument ♦ linking information together which shows different views about the issue, or an aspect of the issue ♦ making comparisons to establish similarities or differences between different views or aspects of the issue ♦ considering possible consequences or implications ♦ showing where evidence or views are consistent or inconsistent ♦ weighing up the different arguments on the issue ♦ considering the strengths and weaknesses of the different views and identifying their relative importance

In this assessment you will:	How you can do this
♦ draw a detailed and reasoned conclusion(s) about the issue	When you have evaluated and analysed all the evidence and information you have collected, you must reach a conclusion(s). You may make your conclusion(s) at the end of your assignment, or you may make a series of conclusions throughout the assignment, or you may do both. Your conclusion(s) may, for example: ♦ refer to a judgement about your political issue ♦ identify which viewpoint is supported by your analysis of the issue Your conclusion(s) must be based on evidence. If you are making one conclusion, you must show that you have considered alternative viewpoints, and make detailed reference to evidence.
♦ communicate information	Your assignment should include: ♦ a clear structure ♦ the use of appropriate political science terminology ♦ references to the political sources you have used ♦ a clear introduction which provides background ♦ a clear, consistent, coherent and sustained line of argument ♦ a clear statement of your conclusion(s)

Administrative information

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History of changes

Version	Description of change	Date
2.0	Penalty for non-submission of resource sheet added to 'Instructions for teachers and lecturers' and 'Instructions for candidates' section. Awarding of marks clarified on pages 5 and 8.	August 2019
3.0	In the knowledge section of the marking grid, we removed the words 'in addition' under the 3, 4 and 5-mark criteria. We've changed references to 'SQA' to 'Qualifications Scotland' throughout. We've made changes to the format and layout of the document to improve accessibility. What you need to do differently Ensure you and your candidates are aware of what is needed to achieve 3, 4 and 5 marks.	September 2026

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

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