

Next Generation Higher National Unit Specification

Politics A: Political Ideas (SCQF level 7)

Unit code: J6ER 47
SCQF level: 7 (8 SCQF credit points)
Valid from: session 2024–25

Prototype unit specification for use in pilot delivery only (version 3.0) August 2024

This unit specification provides detailed information about the unit to ensure consistent and transparent assessment year on year.

This unit specification is for teachers and lecturers and contains all the mandatory information required to deliver and assess the unit.

The information in this unit specification may be reproduced in support of SQA qualifications only on a non-commercial basis. If it is reproduced, SQA must be clearly acknowledged as the source. If it is to be reproduced for any other purpose, written permission must be obtained from permissions@sqa.org.uk.

This edition: August 2024 (version 3.0)

© Scottish Qualifications Authority 2022, 2023, 2024

Unit purpose

This unit is aimed at learners who wish to understand how political concepts help us to understand the ideologies that are the foundation of many political beliefs. It develops learners' abilities to explain different political concepts and political ideologies. Learners then apply these political concepts to the political ideologies. Learners who study the unit have a general interest in politics, or would use it as the theoretical basis for further study.

Entry to the unit is at your centre's discretion. However, we recommend learners have one or more of the following:

- ◆ communication and literacy skills appropriate to study at SCQF level 7
- ◆ skills relating to social sciences
- ◆ previous study of politics through units and National Qualifications (NQ) at SCQF levels 5 or 6, or other similar qualifications

The unit is normally studied as part of HNC Social Sciences but may also be studied on a stand-alone basis.

Unit outcomes

Learners who complete this unit can:

- 1 explain political concepts and political ideologies
- 2 apply political concepts to political ideologies

Evidence requirements

Learners should provide written or oral evidence covering all outcomes, produced under open-book conditions. You should give learners the assessment task at an appropriate point of delivering the unit. Learners should submit their work for marking on a date that you have provided or agreed with them.

Learners must produce a written response of approximately 1,500 words, or an oral response that is 10 to 12 minutes in duration.

Learners' responses must include:

- ◆ an explanation of any two political concepts
- ◆ an explanation of the main features of a political ideology
- ◆ an application of the two political concepts to a political ideology

You can choose to use a mix of assessment methods across a cohort, depending on what is most suitable for each learner; for example, some could give a written response, others could give an oral response and others could respond in the form of a blog.

Learners must fully reference their assessment, using reliable sources appropriate for SCQF level 7. They must list all sources in a bibliography or reference list, in a recognised standard format such as Harvard or APA.

The SCQF level of the unit provides additional context relating to the quality of evidence. Learners should:

- ◆ contribute information that is complex, accurate and relevant to its purpose and audience
- ◆ present ideas clearly and coherently
- ◆ use a structure that is appropriate to the purpose
- ◆ provide supporting evidence or references

Knowledge and skills

The following table shows the knowledge and skills covered by the unit outcomes:

Knowledge	Skills
<p>Outcome 1 Learners should understand:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ political concepts relevant to political ideologies◆ the main features of political ideologies	<p>Outcome 1 Learners can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ explain political concepts◆ explain political ideologies
<p>Outcome 2 Learners should understand:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ the way in which political concepts apply to political ideologies	<p>Outcome 2 Learners can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ apply political concepts to political ideologies◆ apply political concepts to political ideologies, contextualising them based on their relevance to specific ideologies

Meta-skills

Throughout this unit, learners develop meta-skills to enhance their employability in the social sciences sector.

The unit helps learners develop the meta-skills of self-management, social intelligence and innovation meta-skills. Learners should develop meta-skills naturally as you deliver the unit. You should encourage learners to develop a minimum of one area in each of the three categories, but they do not need to cover all suggested subsections. The following suggestions may help shape delivery and assessment, and vary depending on the chosen topics and assessment method.

Self-management

This meta-skill includes:

- ◆ focusing: paying attention and sorting information by filtering relevant facts and knowledge; completing assessments to clear deadlines; producing appropriate work
- ◆ adapting: self-learning; questioning political ideologies and developing critical reflection

Social intelligence

This meta-skill includes:

- ◆ communicating: listening to information on political ideas, research and sources; explaining ideas to fellow learners; producing suitable, understandable assessment responses
- ◆ collaborating: working with other learners, for example on formative debates and project work; sharing ideas and opinions on theories and concepts in the unit content
- ◆ feeling: being aware of others' feelings, needs and concerns; respecting other perspectives to effectively navigate and negotiate complex social relationships and environments

Innovation

This meta-skill includes:

- ◆ curiosity: seeking knowledge about theories and research; using a library; participating in discussions and debates in class; questioning motives, ideas, information and research evidence
- ◆ sense-making: pattern recognition; holistic thinking; synthesis and analysis
- ◆ critical thinking: deconstructing theories and concepts; logical thinking; making judgements

NextGen: HN published prototype unit specification for use in pilot delivery only (version 3.0)
August 2024

There are other meta-skills that learners could develop, depending on the learning and teaching activities you carry out. These include:

- ◆ self-management: integrity, initiative
- ◆ social intelligence: leading
- ◆ innovation: creativity

You can find more information on developing these meta-skills in the Educator Guide.

Literacies

Learners develop core skills in the following literacies:

Communication

Learners develop communication skills in formative and summative assessment. It is part of the evidence requirements for this unit to ensure learners convey complex ideas in a well-structured and coherent way, with references where appropriate. You can give learners opportunities to carry out oral presentations and engage in discussions.

Digital

Learners develop digital skills and computer literacy by using digital packages to produce assessments, and internet sources to research information on political ideologies, concepts, structures and ideas. You can give them guidance on appropriate sources. Using a virtual learning environment (VLE) also supports digital skills.

Learning for Sustainability

Learning for Sustainability aims to build the values, attitudes, knowledge, skills and confidence needed to develop practices and make decisions that are compatible with a sustainable and equitable society. In this unit, there are opportunities to develop knowledge and understanding of social sustainability while studying developments in social sciences research. Many of the topic examples, such as climate change, health and public health, future of cities and urban development, no poverty, food poverty, inequalities, and social mobility touch on or directly link to the [UN Sustainable Development Goals](#).

The unit fits with the following UN Sustainable Development Goals:

- 5 Gender equality: through topics such as rights and equality.
- 10 Reducing inequalities: through topics such as rights and equality.
- 16 Peace, justice and strong institutions: through topics such as accountability, power, democracy and citizenship.

Delivery of unit

This unit is in the 'named social sciences' section of HNC Social Sciences. You can deliver it as part of the group award or as a stand-alone unit. It can lead on to Politics B: Governance of Scotland and the United Kingdom at SCQF level 7.

The amount of time you allocate to each outcome is at your centre's discretion, however, you should consider both outcomes together as you deliver the unit. The overall unit delivery time is a notional 40 hours of contact time for delivery and assessment, and we expect learners to commit a further 40 hours of self-directed study.

Additional guidance

The guidance in this section is not mandatory.

Content and context for this unit

The aim of this unit is to provide an interesting and engaging introduction to politics that serves as a theoretical foundation for subsequent Politics units. The unit provides an overview of politics by introducing learners to important political concepts and theories of the state.

You should cover a range of political concepts in the unit, but you may wish to concentrate on two. These could include:

- ◆ accountability
- ◆ authority
- ◆ citizenship
- ◆ democracy
- ◆ equality
- ◆ justice
- ◆ liberty
- ◆ power
- ◆ rights

This is an indicative list, and you can introduce appropriate alternative political concepts.

Although the assessment covers one political ideology, learners gain a greater understanding of the development and continuing relevance of political ideologies if you introduce them to more than one. You should concentrate on at least three political ideologies, as this allows for greater flexibility in learners' understanding and for selecting a range of assessment and re-assessment methods.

Examples of political ideologies you could cover include:

- ◆ socialism
- ◆ neosocialism
- ◆ communism
- ◆ neocommunism or Eurocommunism
- ◆ liberalism
- ◆ neoliberalism
- ◆ conservatism
- ◆ neoconservatism
- ◆ nationalism
- ◆ neonationalism
- ◆ fascism

- ◆ neofascism
- ◆ populism

Approaches to delivery

You should structure the learning and teaching programme to allow time for learners to develop meta-skills, and academic and other transferable skills. You should also allow for assessment practice within the notional hours suggested.

It would be beneficial to take a varied and active learning approach, where learners engage in supported, independent and collaborative learning. You should encourage learners to take a participative and practical approach. Delivery methods you could use include:

- ◆ demonstration
- ◆ tutorial question and answer sessions
- ◆ debate
- ◆ individual and group research tasks
- ◆ presenting findings
- ◆ VLE
- ◆ digital tools and social media
- ◆ film and visual images
- ◆ close reading of sources

The section on meta-skills provides further guidance on incorporating different skills into delivery and evidence.

You can shape delivery and assessment to support learners to develop their academic skills such as time management, multi-tasking ability, essay writing skills and questioning ability. You can design formative and summative activities and assessments that encourage learners to practise the skills that they need to progress to the next level of study.

You should encourage a questioning approach at all times, as it leads learners to think like social scientists and be analytical and enquiring, rather than passively accepting facts. This empowers learners by building on essential, transferable skills.

Approaches to assessment

You can generate evidence using different types of assessment. The following are suggestions only:

- ◆ a written essay consisting of approximately 1,500 words
- ◆ an oral presentation (suggested 10 to 12 minutes in duration)
- ◆ a visual presentation using learners' choice of media format
- ◆ a quiz with open text responses of approximately 1,500 words
- ◆ an academic poster supported by an oral presentation
- ◆ a storyboard
- ◆ a blog

- ◆ an audiovisual presentation
- ◆ a podcast
- ◆ a debate

There may be other methods that would be more suitable for learners. We recommend that you assess the unit holistically, as that is best to reduce the learners' assessment burden. You can decide to use a portfolio approach with two or more assessment tasks issued at different times in the unit delivery, if that is better for your learners.

You should design an appropriate assessment based on a method that allows learners to meet the evidence requirements. If learners choose an oral method, we recommend that you record this in some form or provide assessor notes on the presentation for external verification purposes. Learners must show evidence of meeting all evidence requirements. Ideally, they would complete oral presentations or poster exhibitions individually. If a group presentation is used, individual learners must show coverage of all evidence requirements. To do this, they may need to provide additional responses to structured questions or an essay. Learners should submit their work for marking on a date that you have provided or agreed with them.

Remember to use the word limits detailed in the 'Evidence requirements' section when you create assessments.

It is possible to combine an academic poster with an oral presentation. For example, learners could produce a detailed poster of the political theories and cover the way in which political concepts apply to theories of the state in the oral presentation. Learners may wish to use a PowerPoint or a mind map as a visual aid. The time spent across both outcomes, covering all evidence requirements, would be 10 to 12 minutes in total, combining both the poster and the oral presentation in that time. They should be done on the same occasion.

Whichever method learners choose, they must be able to access notes, textbooks and other materials in preparation and delivery of the assessment, as it is an open-book assessment.

You should make learners aware of the importance of good judgement in selecting appropriate academic sources. You should encourage them to choose academic sources rather than generic search engines, to enable them to be more confident of information and better equipped to progress to SCQF level 8 units.

If you are using a blog or creation of a website as the way of gathering evidence, it should not be in the public domain. Rather, it should be on an intranet or private area of your VLE to reduce the likelihood of plagiarism.

Authenticating learners' work is essential. It would be helpful to collect notes or visual presentation materials from learners as further evidence of meeting SCQF level 7 in the presentation. You should monitor learners' progress throughout to authenticate submitted work. Where possible, you should use plagiarism detection software.

It is important that learners' responses to the assessment are at SCQF level 7.

Opportunities for e-assessment

Assessment that is supported by information and communication technology (ICT), such as e-testing or the use of e-portfolios or social software, may be appropriate for some assessments in this unit.

If your centre wants to use e-assessment, you must ensure that you apply the national standard to all evidence and that conditions of assessment (as specified in the evidence requirements) are met, regardless of the mode of gathering evidence.

Equality and inclusion

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

You should take into account the needs of individual learners when planning learning experiences, selecting assessment methods or considering alternative evidence.

Guidance on assessment arrangements for disabled learners and/or those with additional support needs is available on the assessment arrangements web page:

www.sqa.org.uk/assessmentarrangements.

Information for learners

Politics A: Political Ideas (SCQF level 7)

This information explains:

- ◆ what the unit is about
- ◆ what you should know or be able to do before you start
- ◆ what you need to do during the unit
- ◆ opportunities for further learning and employment

Unit information

This unit introduces you to political concepts and political ideologies. You study political concepts that could include accountability, citizenship, democracy, equality, justice, liberty, power, authority and rights. You examine how these concepts help us to understand political ideologies. In addition, you learn that applying political concepts to political ideologies is central to an understanding of politics. You develop an enquiring mind and evaluative skills.

You should have good communication skills and an interest in politics. It would also be helpful to have some basic digital skills before you begin.

On completing the unit, you can:

- 1 explain political concepts and political ideologies
- 2 apply political concepts to political ideologies

You are assessed on two of the political concepts and one political ideology that you have studied. You provide written or oral evidence in open-book conditions. This means that you are allowed access to materials such as textbooks, notes and your virtual learning environment (VLE).

During the unit, you develop academic skills such as time management, multi-tasking ability, digital skills, essay writing skills and questioning ability based on the formative and summative activities and assessments.

You also develop key literacies such as communication, developed in formative and summative assessment. You learn to convey complex ideas in a well-structured and coherent way, with references where appropriate. Oral presentations and discussions may also be used to help you improve your communication skills. You develop digital skills and computer literacy by using digital packages to produce assessments, and internet sources to research information on political theorists, political concepts and other political ideas.

During the unit, you are introduced to Learning for Sustainability ideas, with links made to UN Sustainable Development Goals, particularly while studying political concepts.

This unit can support learning in other related units, such as Politics B: Governance of Scotland and the United Kingdom at SCQF level 7. You may be able to study HND Social

NextGen: HN published prototype unit specification for use in pilot delivery only (version 3.0)
August 2024

Sciences or a degree programme in a related subject if you study the unit as part of the HNC
Social Sciences.

Meta-skills

Throughout this unit, you develop meta-skills to enhance your employability in the social sciences sector.

Meta-skills include self-management, social intelligence and innovation.

You develop these naturally as you take part in the range of learning and teaching activities and produce assessment responses. Improving meta-skills such as organising your time (self-management) and communicating ideas clearly (social intelligence) is useful for future study and employment, as well as during the unit.

Administrative information

Published: March 2024 (version 3.0)

Superclass: EA

History of changes

Version	Description of change	Date
2.0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Change of focus from theories of state to political ideologies. Wording changed throughout. ◆ In 'Evidence requirements', bullet points were removed and focus changed to political ideology. ◆ In 'Knowledge and skills', focus changed to political ideologies. Extra bullet point added for 'knowledge' in outcome 2. ◆ In 'Content and context', the list of theories of the state was removed and replaced by a list of political ideologies. ◆ In 'Approaches to assessment', additional information allowing group presentations was added. ◆ Rewording or additional sentences to standardise statements across HNC Social Sciences units in 'Evidence requirements', 'Meta-skills', 'Approaches to delivery' and 'Information for learners'. 	June 2023
3.0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ In 'Unit Purpose', changed focus from 'state and individual' to 'political ideologies'. Removed reference to the requirement to use holistic assessment in 'Evidence Requirements, as well as changed the 2nd bullet point from 'a description' to 'an explanation'. ◆ In 'Knowledge and Skills', deletion of the bullet point 'how to evaluate political concepts' from outcome 2 Knowledge. ◆ In Approaches to assessment', additional words that a holistic or a portfolio approach can be used were added. ◆ In 'Information for learners', deletion of reference to assessment at the end of the unit. 	April 2024

NextGen: HN published prototype unit specification for use in pilot delivery only (version 3.0)
August 2024

Note: please check [SQA's website](#) to ensure you are using the most up-to-date version of this document.

© Scottish Qualifications Authority 2022, 2023, 2024