Next Generation Higher National Unit Specification

Politics B: Governance of Scotland and the United Kingdom (SCQF level 7)

Unit code: J6ES 47

SCQF level: 7 (16 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.

This edition: August 2024 (version 3.0)

Unit purpose

This unit develops learners' knowledge and understanding of the Scottish and the United Kingdom systems of government.

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

♦ communication skills appropriate to study at SCQF level 7

♦ previous study of politics through units and National Qualifications (NQ) at SCQF levels 5 or 6, or other similar qualifications

♦ other knowledge, skills and experience relevant to the unit

Learners study the nature of the Scottish and UK constitution; decision-making processes; forces that have an impact on the constitution and decision-making processes; the roles and functions of the Scottish and UK Parliaments and Executives; parties and pressure groups; and the key electoral systems operating within this context.

Learners also study concepts that help them compare and contrast the constitution of the United Kingdom with decision-making and governance in Scotland.

Unit outcomes

Learners who complete this unit can:

1   analyse key topics relating to the governance of the United Kingdom
2   analyse key differences relating to the governance of Scotland

Evidence requirements

Learners should provide written or oral evidence covering all outcomes, produced under open-book conditions. You should give the task at an appropriate point of delivery of 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 assessment response between 2,000 and 2,500 words, or an oral response that is 12 to 18 minutes in duration.

Learners must provide evidence to demonstrate their knowledge and skills across both outcomes by showing that they can evaluate key topics and analyse the key differences between governance in Scotland and in the United Kingdom. You can find topic areas in the 'Additional guidance' section.

Learners' responses must include:

♦   two out of five key topics relating to the governance of Scotland and the United Kingdom
♦   the main features of each of the two key topics chosen
♦   the difference in role and functions in governance in Scotland and the United Kingdom for two key topics
♦   an explanation of the relationship between Westminster and Holyrood, including examples

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 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
Outcome 1 Learners should understand: ♦ the importance of key topics relating to the governance of the United Kingdom ♦ the main features of each topic ♦ the relationship of each topic to the governance of the United Kingdom ♦ the role and functions of each topic within governance and the UK political system	**Outcome 1** Learners can: ♦ explain the main features of each topic ♦ analyse the main features of each topic relevant to the governance of the United Kingdom
Outcome 2 Learners should understand: ♦ the comparison between Scotland's governance and that of the United Kingdom ♦ the relationship between Westminster and Holyrood ♦ examples of co-operation, conflict and compromise between Westminster and Holyrood	**Outcome 2** Learners can: ♦ analyse the relationship between governance in Scotland and governance in the United Kingdom

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. Learners should develop meta-skills naturally throughout 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 concerning political structures and decision-making processes

♦ adapting: self-learning; developing resilience by questioning the established roles and functions of political parties, pressure groups, and the application and significance of the UK and Scottish parliamentary electoral systems; critical reflection

♦ integrity: taking part in discussions on the importance of integrity in Parliament

Social intelligence

This meta-skill includes:

♦ communicating: listening to information on political systems, research and sources; explaining the roles and functions of political parties, pressure groups and electoral systems 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 the unit content

♦ feeling: being aware of others' feelings, needs and concerns; respecting other perspectives to effectively navigate and negotiate complex political concepts, structures and ideals

Innovation

This meta-skill includes:

♦ curiosity: questioning parliamentary structure and different electoral systems; sourcing information and problem recognition

♦ sense-making: holistic thinking; synthesis and analysis in constructing debates; critical reflection using comparison and contrasting perspectives; participating in discussions to understand why people behave as they do; blending the range of ideas and considering and evaluating them

♦ critical thinking: deconstructing political concepts and processes; logical thinking; making judgements; reflecting on the accurate and non-biased presentation of facts

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

♦ self-management: initiative
♦ social intelligence: leading
♦ innovation: creativity

Literacies

Learners develop core skills in the following literacies:

Numeracy

Learners develop their numeracy skills by understanding facts and statistics related to the parliamentary electoral system.

Communication

Learners develop communication skills in formative and summative assessment. It is part of the evidence requirements for the 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 theorists, 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 examples of governance and political systems touch on or directly link to the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

The unit fits with the following UN Sustainable Development Goal:

16 Peace, justice and strong institutions: through understanding how the Executive, Parliament, political parties and electoral systems work in Scotland and the United Kingdom.

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 is one of two units in the HNC Social Sciences group award that cover politics. The unit works well if delivered alongside Politics A: Political Ideas 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 80 hours contact time for delivery and assessment, and we expect learners to commit a further 80 hours of self-directed study.

Additional guidance

The guidance in this section is not mandatory.

Content and context for this unit

This unit aims to provide learners with an understanding of the roles and functions of political parties, pressure groups, and the application and significance of Scottish and United Kingdom parliamentary and electoral systems. In addition, learners consider the debates concerning Scotland's constitutional position and how this relates to the United Kingdom.

Analyse key topics relating to the governance of the United Kingdom (outcome 1)

You should focus on the six political topics:

♦ Constitutional Arrangements
♦ The Executive
♦ Parliament
♦ The Party Political System
♦ Pressure Groups
♦ The Parliamentary Electoral System

You should teach them all in the context of how they operate across the United Kingdom.

For Constitutional Arrangements, you should introduce learners to the nature and development of the United Kingdom constitution through an understanding of the unwritten nature of the constitution and how it has developed as a result of statute law, precedent and common law, and shift in the locus of sovereignty.

In relation to The Executive, learners should explain and discuss the role, functions and powers of the UK Executive and Prime Minister. Learners should understand the historical development of each office and examine arguments on the nature of prime ministerial power and diminishing cabinet responsibility under dominant prime ministers. They should provide evidence of knowledge of contemporary political issues provoking debate about prime ministerial power.

In relation to Parliament, learners should be aware of the roles and functions of both Houses of Parliament, the historical reasons for the dominance of the Commons, the legislative process and the roles and functions of Members of Parliament. They should explain Private Members' legislation and the committee system.

In relation to The Party Political System, learners must be aware of the development of the party system and the nature of UK party government. They should show evidence of understanding the roles and functions of political parties in the UK, the whip system and candidate selection procedures.

In relation to Pressure Groups, learners should explain and discuss the role and functions of pressure groups, the typology of pressure groups, and the debate over the role pressure

groups occupy in a modern democracy. They should analyse examples of pressure group activity and their impact on political parties, decision-making and the legislative process within the UK.

In relation to The Parliamentary Electoral System, learners should analyse and evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the current electoral system. This should include an analysis of voting behaviour and changes to patterns of voting behaviour.

Analyse key differences relating to the governance of Scotland (outcome 2)

You should focus on the same six topics as outcome 1, looking at the differences between governance in Scotland and the United Kingdom. It is also important that learners understand the relevance of debates on devolution, devolution max, and independence and separatism.

For Constitutional Arrangements you should focus on:

♦ the impact of devolution on Scotland

♦ concepts related to Scotland's constitutional position

♦ the devolution max and independence debate on the future governance of Scotland

For The Executive, you should cover the powers and functions of the Scottish Executive and First Minister, with comparisons made to the United Kingdom executive powers and functions.

For Parliament, you should cover the Scottish Parliament's governance and constitutional arrangements, as well as how they contrast with the United Kingdom governance and constitutional arrangements.

For The Party Political System, you should explore the different party political systems in Scotland and the United Kingdom.

For Pressure Groups, you can discuss the impact of pressure groups on the political parties, highlighting that the differences between the operation of pressure groups on the United Kingdom system and in Scotland can be slight, despite the political parties often having separate operations and identities.

For The Parliamentary Electoral System, learners should analyse and evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the current electoral system as used in Scottish parliamentary elections, and contrast this with the system in the UK. This should include an analysis of the impact the electoral system can have on voting behaviour and parliamentary make up.

You should place full emphasis on the relationship between Scotland's and the United Kingdom's systems of governance: the Scottish Parliament and Westminster. Learners should understand the powers and functions of the First Minister, the Scottish Government and the Scottish Parliament and contrast this with the United Kingdom. You should encourage learners to evaluate the relationship between the Scottish Parliament and the United Kingdom, using examples of co-operation, conflict and compromise between Westminster and Holyrood.

You should stress to learners that it is essential that they keep themselves informed and up to date on current affairs relating to both UK and Scottish political developments.

Approaches to delivery

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

You should consider key topics from a UK and a Scotland perspective in your teaching and learning activities.

A varied and active learning approach would be beneficial, where you facilitate supported, independent and collaborative learning, and encourage learners to take a learner-centred, participative and practical approach. You can use a range of delivery methods to enable learners to gain knowledge, understanding and meta-skills, such as:

♦ traditional lectures
♦ classroom activities
♦ group work
♦ demonstration
♦ debate
♦ individual and group research tasks
♦ presenting findings
♦ VLE
♦ digital tools and social media
♦ film and visual images
♦ close reading of sources

You can shape delivery and assessment to support learners to develop their academic skills such as time management, digital skills, essay writing skills, referencing and citation skills. 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.

Approaches to assessment

There is a wide variety of assessment methods you could use to allow learners to meet the evidence requirements. The following are suggestions and there may be other methods that would be suitable.

Learners can choose the format of their submission as long as they address each element of each outcome. 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.

Written responses can take the form of an essay, report, blog, website or a set of structured questions. They should consist of between 2,000 and 2,500 words.

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. Oral

presentations or poster exhibitions should be 12 to 18 minutes in duration. 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.

Other assessment forms could include preparing papers for a debate, writing an essay or answering a set of structured questions. The assessment could take the form of a report; an individual oral presentation or a poster exhibition with oral explanation of the poster; a podcast; or a combination of assessment approaches in accordance with the holistic open-book nature of the assessment, appropriate to meet the evidence requirements.

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 B: Governance of Scotland and the United Kingdom (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 the Scottish and United Kingdom political systems of governance. It allows you to understand and compare the nature of the Scottish and United Kingdom constitution, and the institutions and decision-making processes taking place in Westminster and Holyrood. It also enables you to understand the nature and purpose of the different electoral systems and to comprehend some of the forces that have an impact on modern day Scottish and United Kingdom politics, such as pressure groups, and the effects of proportional representation on the Scottish political system and the parties operating within it. In addition, you study debates regarding the concepts of devolution, devolution max and separatism.

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 analyse key topics relating to the governance of the United Kingdom
2 analyse key differences relating to the governance of Scotland

You are assessed, using an open-book assessment covering both unit outcomes. This means that you have access to materials such as textbooks, notes and your virtual learning environment (VLE). You can give your assessment response in writing or orally. If your assessment response is written, it must be 2,000 to 2,500 words, and if it is oral, it must be between 12 and 18 minutes long.

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 topics, concepts and ideas.

During the unit, you are introduced to Learning for Sustainability ideas, with links made to the UN Sustainable Development Goals. These are particularly relevant when you study topics such as strong institutions, inequalities and pressure groups.

It would be useful for you to keep informed and up to date on current affairs relating to both Scottish and United Kingdom political developments.

The unit can support learning in other related units, such as Politics A: Political Ideas at SCQF level 7. You may be able to study HND Social 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

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Superclass: EA

History of changes

Version	Description of change	Date
2.0	♦ Rewording in 'Evidence requirements' to increase the length of written and oral responses. ♦ 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', 'Learning for Sustainability', 'Delivery of unit' and 'Information for learners'.	June 2023
3.0	♦ Removed reference to the requirement to use holistic assessment in 'Evidence Requirements' and 'Information for learners'. ♦ Combined 3rd and 4th bullet points in 'Evidence Requirements'. ♦ In 'Context and content for this unit', the original topic of The Party Political System is split into two separate topics of The Party Political System and Pressure Groups. Also, in relation to The Executive, the discussion should be on the UK Executive rather than the UK Parliament. ♦ In 'Approaches to assessment', statement added to clarify that key topics should be considered from a UK and Scotland perspective, and additional words that a holistic or a portfolio approach can be used have been included.	April 2024

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