



**General Certificate of Education
January 2011**

Government and Politics

GOV3A

The Politics of the USA

Unit 3

Mark Scheme

Mark schemes are prepared by the Principal Examiner and considered, together with the relevant questions, by a panel of subject teachers. This mark scheme includes any amendments made at the standardisation meeting attended by all examiners and is the scheme which was used by them in this examination. The standardisation meeting ensures that the mark scheme covers the candidates' responses to questions and that every examiner understands and applies it in the same correct way. As preparation for the standardisation meeting each examiner analyses a number of candidates' scripts: alternative answers not already covered by the mark scheme are discussed at the meeting and legislated for. If, after this meeting, examiners encounter unusual answers which have not been discussed at the meeting they are required to refer these to the Principal Examiner.

It must be stressed that a mark scheme is a working document, in many cases further developed and expanded on the basis of candidates' reactions to a particular paper. Assumptions about future mark schemes on the basis of one year's document should be avoided; whilst the guiding principles of assessment remain constant, details will change, depending on the content of a particular examination paper.

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CRITERIA FOR MARKING AS/A2 GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS

Introduction

AQA's revised Government and Politics specification has been designed to be objectives-led in that questions are set which address the assessment objectives published in the specification. The assessment objectives for A Level and AS are the same, but the weightings are different at AS and A2. Details of the weightings are given in Section 4.2 of the specification.

The schemes of marking reflect these objectives. The mark scheme which follows is of the *levels-of-response* type showing that candidates are expected to demonstrate their mastery of the skills required in the context of their knowledge and understanding of Government and Politics. Mark schemes provide the necessary framework for examiners but they cannot cover all eventualities. Candidates should be given credit for partially complete answers. Where appropriate, candidates should be given credit for referring to recent and contemporary developments in Government and Politics.

Consistency of marking is of the essence in all public examinations. It is therefore of vital importance that assistant examiners apply the mark scheme as directed by the Principal Examiner in order to facilitate comparability with the marking of other options.

Before scrutinising and applying the detail of the specific mark scheme which follows, assistant examiners are required to familiarise themselves with the general principles of the mark scheme as contained in the Assessment Matrix.

At A2, generally speaking, there is no unambiguously 'right' or 'wrong' answer to the 30-mark questions. Answers will be judged on factors such as quality of the argument, depth of knowledge and understanding, a synoptic grasp of the subject, appropriateness of the examples and internal logic of the discussion. Where candidates are presented with a proposition to be discussed they may support it, reject it or adopt a balanced position.

There are no limits to the areas of knowledge that candidates may feel able bring to the discussion. Therefore the specification of requirements outlined in the mark schemes can only be indicative. Candidates are not expected to include all the material presented in order to access the full range of available marks. At the same time they may successfully include material from their particular studies which is not indicated in the scheme.

Using a levels-of-response mark scheme

Good examining is about the consistent application of judgement. Mark schemes provide a framework within which examiners exercise their judgement. This is especially so in subjects like Government and Politics, which in part rely upon analysis, evaluation, argument and explanation. With this in mind, examiners should use the Assessment Matrix alongside the detailed mark scheme for each question. The Assessment Matrix provides a framework ensuring a consistent, generic source from which the detailed mark schemes are derived. This supporting framework ensures a consistent approach within which candidates' responses are marked according to the level of demand and context of each question.

Examiners should initially make a decision about which Level any given response should be placed in. Having determined the appropriate Level the examiners must then choose the precise mark to be given within that Level. In making a decision about a specific mark to award, it is vitally important to think first of the mid-range within the Level, where that Level covers more than two marks. Comparison with other candidates' responses to the same question might then suggest whether the middle mark is unduly generous or severe.

In making decisions away from the middle of the Level, examiners should ask themselves questions relating to candidate attainment, including the quality of language. The more positive the answers, the higher should be the mark awarded. We want to avoid ‘bunching’ of marks.

Levels mark schemes can produce regression to the mean, which should be avoided. A candidate’s script should be considered by asking ‘Is it:

- precise in its use of factual information?
- appropriately detailed?
- factually accurate?
- appropriately balanced or markedly better in some areas than others?
- generally coherent in expression and cogent in development (as appropriate to the level awarded)?
- well presented as to general quality of language?’

The overall aim is to mark positively, giving credit for what candidates know, understand and can do.

A2 GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS**GENERIC MARK SCHEME for questions with a total of 10 marks**

Knowledge and Understanding: Recall, Select & Deploy	Skills: Analysis & Evaluation	Communication
AO1	AO2	AO3
<p>Level 4 (4 marks) The candidate demonstrates a comprehensive knowledge and understanding of political concepts, institutions and processes. The candidate fully addresses the requirements of the question and provides developed and effective to comprehensive interpretation. The answer also provides clear to accurate evidence and, where appropriate, good to excellent examples to illustrate points made.</p>	<p>Level 4 (4 marks) The candidate applies an excellent range of developed concepts and uses appropriate political theory to construct a clear and cogent explanation or argument.</p>	<p>Levels 3–4 (2 marks) The candidate communicates clearly and effectively in a sustained and structured manner, using appropriate political vocabulary. There are few, if any, errors of spelling, punctuation and grammar, and the response should be legible.</p>
<p>Level 3 (3 marks) The candidate demonstrates good knowledge and understanding of political concepts, institutions and processes. The candidate clearly addresses the requirements of the question and provides sound interpretation and contextual awareness. The answer includes good examples to illustrate points made.</p>	<p>Level 3 (3 marks) The candidate applies a good range of developed concepts and uses appropriate political theory to construct a clear and cogent explanation or argument.</p>	<p>The answer has a clear sense of direction, is focused on the question and, where appropriate, has a conclusion which flows from the discussion.</p>
<p>Level 2 (2 marks) The candidate demonstrates limited knowledge and understanding of political concepts, institutions and processes. The candidate makes a limited attempt to address the requirements of the question and provides little to partial, but reasonably effective, interpretation. Answers offer limited evidence and few, or inaccurate, examples to illustrate points made.</p>	<p>Level 2 (2 marks) The candidate applies a limited range of concepts and makes limited use of political theory or ideas in developing an explanation or argument.</p>	<p>Levels 1–2 (1 mark) The candidate communicates explanations or arguments with limited clarity and effectiveness, using limited political vocabulary. The answer may lack either a clear focus on the question or a sense of direction.</p>
<p>Level 1 (1 mark) The candidate demonstrates little knowledge and understanding of political concepts, institutions and processes. The candidate makes little attempt to address the requirements of the question and provides little interpretation. Answers offer little evidence and few, or inaccurate, examples to illustrate points made.</p>	<p>Level 1 (1 mark) The candidate applies few concepts and makes little use of political theory or ideas in developing an explanation or argument.</p>	<p>There are frequent errors of spelling, punctuation and grammar, and legibility may be a problem. A conclusion, where appropriate, may be offered but its relationship to the preceding discussion is modest or implicit.</p>
<p>0 marks No relevant response.</p>	<p>0 marks No relevant response.</p>	<p>0 marks No relevant response.</p>

A2 GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS**GENERIC MARK SCHEME for questions with a total of 30 marks**

Knowledge and Understanding: Recall, Select & Deploy	Skills: Analysis & Evaluation	Communication
A01	A02	A03
<p>Level 4 (10–12 marks) The candidate demonstrates a comprehensive knowledge and understanding of political concepts/theories/institutions and processes and the relationships between them. A synoptic approach is fully developed, drawing appropriately on knowledge, perspectives and examples from a wide range of studies in government and politics. The answer fully addresses the requirements of the question and demonstrates excellent contextual awareness. The answer includes excellent examples to illustrate points made. The answer includes detailed and comprehensive interpretations or explanations, as well as accurate evidence and relevant examples, to illustrate points made.</p>	<p>Level 4 (10–12 marks) The candidate displays excellent awareness of the implications and demands of the question. There is an excellent and sustained focus on the specific question asked. There is clear and full evaluation of political institutions, processes and behaviour, which displays a sophisticated awareness of differing viewpoints and recognition of issues. Appropriate parallels and connections are clearly identified, together with well-developed comparisons. A wide range of concepts is used and developed.</p>	<p>Level 4 (6 marks) The candidate communicates structured and sustained arguments, explanations and conclusions with clarity. Excellent use is made of political vocabulary to construct cogent and coherent arguments and explanations. The response should be legible, with few, if any, errors of spelling, punctuation and grammar. The answer has a clear sense of direction, culminating in a conclusion that flows from the preceding discussion.</p>
<p>Level 3 (7–9 marks) The candidate demonstrates sound knowledge and understanding of political concepts/theories/institutions and processes and the relationships between them. A synoptic approach is well developed using a range of knowledge, perspectives and examples gained elsewhere in the study of government and politics. The answer clearly addresses the requirements of the question and demonstrates sound contextual awareness. The answer includes developed and effective interpretations or explanations and also clear evidence and good examples to illustrate points made.</p>	<p>Level 3 (7–9 marks) The candidate displays sound awareness of the implications and demands of the question. There is a clear focus on the question. There is a sound evaluation of political institutions, processes and behaviour, which displays good awareness of differing viewpoints and recognition of issues. There is good recognition of parallels and comparisons. Appropriate concepts are used and developed.</p>	<p>Level 3 (4–5 marks) The candidate communicates arguments, explanations and conclusions well. Good use is made of political vocabulary to construct clear arguments and explanations. The response should be legible but there may be occasional errors of spelling, punctuation and grammar. The candidate produces an answer with a conclusion linked to the preceding discussion.</p>

GENERIC MARK SCHEME for questions with a total of 30 marks (continued)

Knowledge and Understanding: Recall, Select & Deploy	Skills: Analysis & Evaluation	Communication
AO1	AO2	AO3
<p>Level 2 (4–6 marks) The candidate demonstrates outline knowledge and understanding of political concepts/theories/institutions and processes and some awareness of the relationships between them. The answer makes a limited attempt to address the question and demonstrates contextual awareness covering part of the question. An attempt to develop a synoptic approach is made, using a limited range of knowledge, perspectives and examples gained more broadly in the study of government and politics. The answer includes a partial and reasonably effective attempt at interpretation or explanation with some examples to illustrate points made.</p>	<p>Level 2 (4–6 marks) The candidate displays little awareness of the implications and demands of the question, resulting in a restricted focus. There is a limited evaluation of political institutions, processes and behaviour which displays a partial awareness of differing viewpoints and issues. There is some recognition of basic parallels and comparisons. Arguments and explanations are undeveloped, with a limited use of concepts.</p>	<p>Level 2 (2–3 marks) The candidate communicates arguments and conclusions adequately, with a limited use of political vocabulary. There are frequent errors of spelling, punctuation and grammar, and legibility may be a problem. A conclusion is offered but its relationship to the preceding discussion may be modest or implicit.</p>
<p>Level 1 (1–3 marks) The candidate demonstrates a slight and incomplete knowledge and understanding of political institutions and processes and a limited awareness of the relationships between them. A very limited attempt at synopticity is made, sometimes using superficial or inaccurate knowledge, perspectives and examples cited from elsewhere in their study of government and politics. There is little attempt to address the requirements of the question. There is only superficial awareness, if any, of the context of the question, with little interpretation and few, if any, examples often inaccurately reported or inappropriately used.</p>	<p>Level 1 (1–3 marks) The candidate displays little awareness of the implications and demands of the question, and focus is lacking. Evaluation of political institutions, processes and behaviour is superficial. Analysis shows little awareness of differing viewpoints and issues. There is little, if any, recognition of parallels and comparisons. Arguments, explanations and use of concepts are superficial and naïve.</p>	<p>Level 1 (1 mark) The answer relies upon narrative that is not fully coherent. There is little or no use of political vocabulary. Errors in spelling, punctuation and grammar may be intrusive and the response may not be legible. A conclusion, if present, is not adequately related to the preceding discussion.</p>
<p>0 marks No relevant response.</p>	<p>0 marks No relevant response.</p>	<p>0 marks No relevant response.</p>

Topic 1 The Electoral Process and Direct Democracy**Total for this topic: 40 marks**

(01) Consider the significance of the 'invisible primary' in the presidential nomination process. (10 marks)

Candidates should recognise that the term refers to the period especially *after* the mid-term elections, when several presidential candidates set up exploratory committees or assemble campaign teams and declare their intention to run, but long *before* the first caucus and primary of the presidential nomination process. It has no formal status (hence 'invisible') and the term has developed to describe 'testing the waters' and the jockeying for position that takes place amongst the numerous potential candidates, especially through media exposure and in the key states (like New Hampshire and Iowa).

The IP is *significant* for several reasons, which should be discussed at the higher levels of response:

- The need to gain national *name and image recognition* especially if the candidate lacks national exposure. This can include TV appearances and intra-party debates. Such as the Ames straw poll.
- The need to attract a *campaign war chest* to create an effective campaign in the increasingly front-loaded first caucuses and primaries, or even to deter challengers and rivals.
- The need to gain *momentum* ('The Big Mo') and maximum exposure for the coming primary and caucus campaigns.

Reward highly answers that refer to evidence and examples from recent IPs, such as the fact that the 'winner' of the IP does not necessarily go on to win the nomination, eg Howard Dean in 2004 and Hillary Clinton and Mitt Romney in 2008, so its 'significance' may be questioned.

Additional analysis,(AO2), such as the link between the IP and the development of the '*permanent campaign*' and 'continuous electioneering', should also be highly rewarded. Candidates may refer to the current IP and the individuals involved such as Palin, Huckabee and Pawlenty.

(02) Evaluate how democratic, in practice, initiatives and referendums are in making public policy decisions in the USA. (30 marks)

In response to this question candidates must, at a minimum, understand and explain the process of direct democracy found in several (but not all) US states (but not nationally because of the lack of constitutional provision for their use) through the initiative and referendum processes. This would involve explanation of the signature collection needed to get a proposition onto the ballot paper to put the question to registered voters for a majority vote at the next election (there were 183 such propositions in 2008).

In response to the actual question, candidates should indicate why such devices may be regarded as highly democratic (in theory) by using several of the following possible arguments:

- Initiatives are '*bottom up*' *direct democratic* devices initiated by the voters themselves and not 'top-down' decisions made by elected representatives and then put to the voters for a decision (although some states allow for decisions made by elected representatives to be put to the

voters in a referendum question, such as changes to the state constitution or Bond issues). As such, they can be seen as highly democratic devices showing '*popular sovereignty*'.

- They directly involve the voters in decision-making on specific issues and encourage greater participation and involvement, which is good for democracy.
- They remove some of the disadvantages of representative democracy, such as 'blanket votes' at elections or the avoidance of politically controversial issues by those seeking election.
- Referendums mean that state legislatures cannot act without the permission of the voters on some issues.

However, the term '*in practice*' in the question suggests that devices such as initiatives are not without their critics and may *not* be as democratic as they at first appear. Accordingly, it is expected that for higher-level marks, candidates will evaluate several of the arguments *against* the use of such seemingly democratic devices, such as the problems that can arise with the use of such devices to make decisions for the public, not simply those that vote in the process. These may include:

- Low turnout undermining the legitimacy of the result.
- The wording of the questions.
- The methods used to collect the signatures.
- The unequal funding of the two sides.
- The dominance of special interests in the campaigns.
- Initiatives can promote short-term gain against long-term interest.
- Some propositions have discriminated against minorities.
- State Supreme Courts can overturn initiative decisions as unconstitutional and few are successful.

Candidates should also be rewarded for constructing a *defence* of public policy decision-making remaining in the hands of elected, and thus accountable, state representatives in the state legislature who, in the classic Burkean sense, make decisions using their judgement as to what is in the best interests of *all* the state population in the *long term*.

For higher-level marks, expect discussion of much of the above, indicating both sides of the debate on the democratic nature of initiatives and referendums. It is essential that, for high marks, candidates present evidence and examples of controversial decisions made through the initiative and referendum process, such as Proposition 13 in 1978, Big Green in 1992 or examples from recent election cycles, such as anti gay marriage, affirmative action, abortion and stem cell research initiatives in 2004 and Propositions 13 and 8 in California in 2008. They may refer to proposition 19 on cannabis in California in 2010. Excellent candidates may know of recent controversies caused in California over the link between the results of propositions and the state's fiscal crisis.

Please note recall elections are not relevant to this question.

Topic 2 Political Parties**Total for this topic: 40 marks**

(03) Why may it not be totally accurate to describe the USA as having a two-party system?
(10 marks)

The normal characterisation of the US party system is that it is dominated by two parties, the Democrats and Republicans, and thus is an example of a classic two-party system. However, candidates must be able to show why this description may not be '*totally accurate*' when describing the US party system. This may be done in several ways, at least two of which should be covered for higher level marks:

- There have been third parties which, although not usually electorally successful or permanent (the Green Party in 2008, the Reform Party in 1996 or the American Independence Party in 1968), have offered some choice to American voters in some presidential elections, and there are two independent senators in the Senate.
- The argument that the USA, in reality, does not have a two-party system but rather a *100 party system* because the two main parties are highly *de-centralised* and organised under state law, so are different in each of the 50 states both ideologically and organisationally, eg the Democratic Party in California is very different from the Democratic Party in Alabama, and the Republican Party in Texas is very different from the Republican Party in Maine. The national parties can be seen as weak, especially between elections.
- It can be argued that there is *one-party* dominance in several states, such as the Republican Party in much of the mid-west, and increasingly the Democratic Party dominates New England.
- The *four-party-system* argument that suggests that both parties have their highly distinct conservative and liberal/moderate wings.

The marks for this question will relate to the evidence and examples presented of the above analysis.

(04) 'Two broad coalitions with more ideological differences within them than between them.'
To what extent is this still an accurate description of the Democratic and Republican parties?
(30 marks)

Candidates should consider whether this traditional description of the two main US parties is *still* accurate today and whether there are more *intra* than *inter*-party differences. Both US parties are changing in many ways but the '*broad coalition*' description is still a fairly accurate one, with their '*catch-all*' 'umbrella' nature alongside a more *pragmatic* desire to win elections rather than maintain ideological purity. At the higher level of response, candidates should offer an explanation as to *why* the parties are/have to be 'broad coalitions', given the huge social and economic diversity of the US and the first-past-the-post electoral system, amongst other things.

However, it can also be argued that there are still many ideological differences *between* them:

- As far as the Democratic Party is concerned, candidates should show knowledge and understanding of their 'big tent' nature but also recognise that they put a greater emphasis on values of collectivism rather than individualism, and on government intervention, and follow a more 'liberal' set of policies and principles. Evidence of these points should be presented.
- As far as the Republican Party is concerned, candidates should demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of their rather different but still 'broad coalition' which places a greater

emphasis on small government and individual freedom and follows a generally more 'conservative' set of policies and principles.

- Both parties, therefore, represent and speak for very different sections of the electorate and their different interests and values.

However, the question demands that candidates address the statement that the parties actually have more differences *within* them than *between* them, are deeply divided internally and not ideologically coherent. *Evidence* should be presented to demonstrate these internal divisions and factions:

- Both parties have their conservative and liberal/moderate wings.
- The Democrats have been divided into groupings such as the southern conservative Democrats (Dixiecrats in the past, 'Blue Dog' Democrats today), with conservative views on most social, economic and foreign policy issues, the northern liberal democrats such as the late Ted Kennedy or Nancy Pelosi, with liberal views on most policy issues, and the 'New Democrats' dating from the 1980s and Clinton and Gore's Democratic Leadership Council.
- The Republicans have also been internally divided, with splits between social and fiscal conservatives, neo-conservatives and compassionate conservatives (often dubbed RINOs). The Republican Party is often split between its more moderate and more conservative wings.

The word '*still*' within the question is a key discriminator and must be addressed for higher-level marks. This allows well-prepared candidates to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of *changes* to the parties in recent times and provide evidence of *more* ideological cohesion. It could be argued that the parties have *polarised* at the same time as internal divisions have remained:

- The Democratic Party has become a *more liberal* party, in particular with the loss of its southern wing since the 1960s.
- The Republican Party has become a *more conservative* party since Reagan and in particular since the 'Contract with America' in 1994 and under the recent influence of the Tea Party movement and extreme conservatives such as Sarah Palin or Rand Paul.

There is still plenty of evidence of internal divisions over many issues such as health care, the war on terror and the economy, although the electoral success of the Democrats in 2008 helped their unity over issues such as global warming. The Republicans' loss of power led to more evident internal divisions over their future direction. However, candidates may legitimately refer to the recent mid term success of the Republican Party, suggesting the dominance of conservative views on many issues and less internal divisions.

However, voting in Congress and in the states still provides evidence of *both* unity *and* division in both parties on different issues (eg, not a single Republican voted for the 2009 stimulus package in the House and seven Democrats voted against it) and discussion of both should be seen at the very highest level of response.

Topic 3 Voting Behaviour**Total for this topic: 40 marks**

(05) What are 'swing voters' and how important are they in US elections?	(10 marks)
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The psephological term refers to voters who lack a strong sense of *party identification* or *partisan alignment* with a political party and whose votes therefore are 'up for grabs' at elections. They are called 'swing' voters because they can vote for different parties at different elections rather than always voting the same way out of partisan loyalty, as aligned voters tend to do and, therefore, are open to persuasion by both political parties. They are sometimes referred to as '*independent*' voters (floating voters in the UK) and they are estimated to make up around 30% of the American electorate, so could be very important to electoral success or failure.

As a result, most candidates at elections *target* their campaign strategy at these voters. They are 'wooed' by the candidates, who may direct their policies to try and win their support. They are more likely to be influenced by both the candidates themselves and their policies, rather than voting out of tribal loyalty. They may also split their ticket when voting. This kind of analysis is expected for high AO1 and 2 marks.

However, swing voters are *not* always the key to electoral success. This should be addressed for very high marks for this question. In the 2004 presidential election, Karl Rove's electoral strategy for a Bush win was to 'energise the Republican base' of core voters, with tactics designed to appeal to grass roots conservatives rather than independent and generally more moderate 'swing' voters. This was successful.

However, in 2008, McCain tried a similar strategy by choosing Palin as his Vice-Presidential candidate, which backfired, and Obama's successful wooing of the swing voters was certainly a factor in his success; he beat McCain by 8% in this category.

Of particular importance to electoral success are the swing voters who live in key swing states such as Ohio or Florida, which are vital for Electoral College success.

(06) 'The huge social diversity within the US electorate means it is impossible to predict voting behaviour accurately.' To what extent do you agree with this view?	(30 marks)
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Part of a successful response to this question depends on knowledge and understanding of the '*huge social diversity*' of the USA, a term that refers to socio-economic, gender, racial and ethnic, age, religious and regional differences apparent in the highly fragmented US electorate and which helps to explain why certain groups of voters have greater attachments to one party rather than the other.

The question challenges candidates to analyse voting behaviour using psephological evidence, explanations and concepts in their answers. This is essential for higher level marks. The statement suggests it is *impossible* to make predictions about the way in which American voters will vote and candidates should respond to this, and must present evidence which supports/refutes this statement. It is likely that good candidates will discuss the concept of *partisanship* and explain that certain social groups are more likely to vote either Democrat or Republican. They will offer valid and credible explanations for such attachments and predictability of voting behaviour. This addresses the statement that it is 'impossible' to 'predict accurately' party choice.

Analysis and evaluation of the following links between social characteristics and voting behaviour are acceptable in response to the question:

- Economic status. Higher-income voters are more likely to vote Republican and lower-income voters Democrat.
- Gender. Women are more likely to vote Democrat and men Republican.
- Race/Ethnicity. Black and Hispanic voters are more likely to vote Democrat while the Republican Party retains the support of a majority of white voters. The black vote for the Democrats is particularly 'solid' and candidates may analyse why this is the case.
- Age. Younger voters are more likely to vote Democrat while older voters are more likely to vote Republican.
- Religion. Catholics and Jews are more likely to vote Democrat while Protestant voters are more likely to vote Republican.
- Religion. Urban voters in northern and coastal states ('Blue America') are more likely to vote Democrat while rural and suburban voters in the middle and southern states (Red America) are more likely to vote Republican.

At a lower level of response, candidates may simply outline such connections without presenting any explanations or backing evidence for such 'predictability'. At a higher level of response, both AO1 and AO2 marks should be gained for presenting *evidence* of such links (perhaps using figures from the 2008 presidential election or the 2010 mid-terms) and for *explaining* links between a voter's social characteristics and their choice of party candidate.

At the highest level of response, candidates will recognise that where a voter has several *reinforcing* characteristics (for example a low-income, Hispanic, Catholic female voter from a city in California or a wealthy, Protestant, white male voter from the Texas suburbs), the greater the degree of *predictability* of voting behaviour, whereas a voter who has *mixed* characteristics will behave less predictably.

Excellent candidates may argue that the

1. De-alignment of US voters and
2. the increasing importance of *short-term* influences over voting behaviour, such as the *candidates* themselves and the *issues* that dominate at each election, mean that voting behaviour can never be entirely predictable simply on the basis of social characteristics. *Voter volatility* is evident at each election, eg the decline of the Hispanic vote for the Democrats in 2004 or the decline of the wealthy vote for the Republicans in 2008.

Candidates also may discuss voter *re-alignment*, eg the white south from solid Democrat voting until the 1960s to Republican voting from then on, as evidence of 'predictability' in VB and should be rewarded for this. Level 4 responses must refer to predictability and lists of factors affecting VB will generally not rise out of Level 2 or lower Level 3.

Topic 4 Pressure Groups**Total for this topic: 40 marks**

(07) Consider the role and significance of political action committees (PACs) in the USA. (10 marks)

A clear *definition* of political action committees is necessary to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of their *role*:

- They are the fund-raising arm of pressure groups/political organisations.
- They raise electoral finance to support or oppose political candidates at elections, both presidential and congressional.
- They are restricted in the amount of money they can give to candidates but there are 'loopholes' such as 'bundling' contributions.

The '*significance*' of the role of PACs should also be addressed for higher marks, with knowledge and analysis such as:

- Their increasing significance because of the FECA restrictions on political money since the 1970s left a 'funding gap' which they filled.
- The reliance on PAC money from many political candidates, especially congressional incumbents. However, some candidates do refuse PAC money for their campaigns. Evidence of either should be rewarded.
- The perceived links between PAC donations and the 'buying' of political influence.

However, at the highest level of response candidates may indicate that:

- There is little clear evidence showing a link between the taking of PAC money and a politician's subsequent voting so 'significance' may be questioned.
- Also, the rise of 527s and other fundraising groups may have lessened the significance of PAC funding in the US electoral process.
- The transparency of much PAC funding may also lessen their impact. (Excellent candidates may mention the significance of the Supreme Court ruling *FEC v Citizens United* on corporate and union donations.
- Also, PAC funding is much less significant for candidates who fund their own campaigns or receive money from other sources.

(08) 'The democratic advantages of the activities of pressure groups in the US political system far outweigh any concerns regarding their power and influence.' Discuss. (30 marks)

This question picks up on the *debate* surrounding the role of pressure groups in the US political system and whether pressure group activity within it is, on balance, more advantageous to US democracy than any democratic disadvantages they may present in terms of the power and influence some of them have.

It is expected, therefore, that good candidates will present a strong case that pressure groups have several democratic advantages that are likely to include:

- Their representation of the diverse views and interests of the US population in a pluralist democracy, which are then taken into account by the elected and responsible politicians when making policy decisions. Examples should be given such as the AARP representing the elderly, the NAACP representing black America, the pro-life and pro-choice lobbies on abortion, etc.
- The more specific representation of these views and interests than are possible through the party system and electoral systems.
- They allow for the legitimate participation and involvement of citizens in political activity in between elections.
- Their provision of information to policy makers, eg in congressional committee hearings, and also to the public on key issues of public concern such as the environment.

However, the question also states that there are ‘concerns’ regarding the power and influence of pressure groups and these must also be addressed by analysis and evidence such as:

- The power of *some* pressure groups or ‘special interests’ to influence public policy decisions far in excess of their numbers or representative nature and often against what is perceived to be the ‘public interest’. Examples could include the power of the gun lobby (NRA) in blocking gun law reform, the Israeli lobby (AIPAC) in Middle East foreign policy or the corporate and business lobbies in influencing economic policy in their favour.
- The access gained by some groups to decision makers either through financial contributions to campaigns or through *lobbying* activities (K street) and the ‘*revolving door*’ of influence means there is not a ‘level pressure group playing field’.
- The ‘Iron Triangles’ of US government with a three-way ‘cosy relationship’ between some pressure groups, congressional committees and federal departments and agencies.
- The argument that the pressure group world is highly unequal and not all interests are represented within it or have their interests listened to or defended.
- The activities of some fanatical single-issue groups in sometimes illegal or violent forms of direct action.

Examples of the above would be expected in the analysis of pressure group power and influence at the highest level of response, such as the scandals surrounding Enron or the Abramoff cases, or a convincing critique of the power of some specific pressure groups in influencing policy without being either democratically elected or accountable to voters.

The question, however, also demands a focus on whether the democratic advantages actually *outweigh* the concerns over power and influence and this must be addressed at the highest level of response.

Excellent candidates may conclude that some pressure groups may be very powerful compared to the elected and responsible politicians, but also indicate that they can be *constrained* in their power and influence, with examples such as:

- Obama’s restrictions on lobbying activities after 2008.
- They cannot *make* decisions, only attempt to *influence* them.
- There are several legislative restrictions on pressure group activities and finance.
- Most pressure groups are *not* powerful and their influence may be very limited.
- There are often *countervailing* groups providing some form of ‘pluralist balance’.

At a lower level of response, it is likely that candidates will present an over-generalised response on pressure group activity in the USA without attempting to address the specific question or giving clear examples and evidence. At the higher level of response, expect a clear focus on the question, analysis backed up by relevant evidence and examples of pressure group activity, and

the use of terms associated with pressure group analysis such as lobbying, iron triangles, pluralism, etc.

ASSESSMENT OBJECTIVE GRID

A2 Assessment Objective	Marks allocated by Assessment Objective 10-mark question	Marks allocated by Assessment Objective 30-mark question	Total Marks by Assessment Objective
AO1	4	12	16
AO2	4	12	16
AO3	2	6	8
Total	10	30	40