



**General Certificate of Education
June 2012**

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 students' 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 students' 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 students' 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 students 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. Students should be given credit for partially complete answers. Where appropriate, students 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 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, 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 students 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 students may feel able bring to the discussion. Therefore the specification of requirements outlined in the mark schemes can only be indicative. Students 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 students' 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 students' 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 student 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 student'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 students 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 student demonstrates a comprehensive knowledge and understanding of political concepts, institutions and processes. The student 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 student 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 student 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 student demonstrates good knowledge and understanding of political concepts, institutions and processes. The student 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 student 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 student demonstrates limited knowledge and understanding of political concepts, institutions and processes. The student 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 student 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 student 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 student demonstrates little knowledge and understanding of political concepts, institutions and processes. The student 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 student 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 student 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 student 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 student 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 student 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 student 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 student 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 student 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 student 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 student 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 student 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 student 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 student 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) Examine the significance of the caucus system in the presidential nomination process.
(10 marks)

At a minimum, students should be able to give an accurate description (AO1) of the caucus system of delegate selection in the presidential nomination process. This should include knowledge of the fact that caucuses are *meetings* of Democratic and Republican Party activists or strong party identifiers to express their preferences for candidates. They are found in only a few states that tend to be the smaller, less densely populated states such as North Dakota or Wyoming. Most will also know that the first and most important caucus is in Iowa as it is the first voting for the candidates in the presidential race and can give momentum to candidates who win here. Some students may expand this by explaining the caucus process itself – going from small meetings in voters' front rooms in precincts, through different levels – up to the state conventions. Such knowledge is likely to gain high AO1 marks.

As the question asks for the '*significance*' of the caucus system, for AO2 expect analysis of this at the higher levels of response with arguments such as:

- caucuses show the views of the party activists in both parties and tend to be dominated therefore by more extreme ideological views – to the liberal left in the Democratic Party and to the conservative right in the Republican Party. In 2012 the results from the caucuses may be given in evidence or students may refer to previous results in caucus states
- students may argue that caucuses may lack significance because primary selection now provides by far the majority of pledged delegates and most candidates concentrate on the primaries rather than the caucuses, which may at times be ignored (other than Iowa) unless exceptional circumstances such as a very close race
- students may argue that the caucuses are less significant because they are less democratic than the primaries due to the narrowness of the electorate involved
- lower turnout may reduce their significance.

The mark will relate to the evidence and examples presented of the above with reference to specific caucuses and candidates from recent elections.

(02) Evaluate the view that, despite criticisms, the Electoral College is by far the best method of electing the US President.
(30 marks)

This question invites students to evaluate whether the Electoral College (EC) system *does* remain the '*best method*' of electing the US president. As such there should be AO1 knowledge of why the EC system was set up as an *indirect* way of electing the president and the way the EC system actually works in practice (such as 538 votes, 270 to win, how these votes are allocated, etc). This should be provided as context in the better answers (or the basis of AO1 marks in the weaker responses).

The question allows students to show their awareness of the *criticisms* made of the EC and its workings in modern elections and these should be covered as part of the response, but should *not*

take over the answer as the question focus is more on the advantages of the EC. Students who focus mainly on a critique would be unlikely to move much beyond Level 2.

It is likely that much of the following analysis will be present at the higher levels of response, less at the lower levels:

- distortions of the popular vote through the winner take all, simple plurality system found in 48 of the states
- possibility of the winner of the popular vote losing to the winner of the EC vote because of the above distortions as in 2000 (if students use the 2000 election as an example of this then the *reasons* should be fully explained)
- the distorting effects on presidential campaigns because of the need to win the EC vote in the key swing/battleground states and the possible neglect of other states and their interests
- the problem of the ‘faithless’ or ‘rogue’ elector that periodically occurs
- the effects on third party and independent candidates
- the under or over-representation of states with reasons/examples.

It is possible that some students may argue that such criticisms, backed up by necessary examples and evidence, actually do support an argument that the EC does *not* remain ‘by far’ the best method of electing the president. (But they would still have to cover the other side of the argument before coming to a reasoned conclusion as the question requires).

However, the question is stating that the EC DOES remain ‘by far’ (a discriminator) the best method and students may agree with this statement by covering the other side of the debate presenting a defence of the EC system using much of the following analysis for high-level marks:

- despite vote distortions, the EC has produced a president with a mandate and democratic legitimacy in the majority of elections leading to a highly **stable** and very **predictable** system. At the higher levels of response this should be backed up by evidence and examples, eg knowing that problems with the EC have been rare (1884 or 2000 notwithstanding)
- the importance of the EC as part of a federal system of government, with well-established and jealously guarded states’ rights (to elect the president)
- the system also is fair to the states through the fact that the districts relate to population, with populous states having the most EC votes. Re-districting also leads to fairness within the system as states which grow in population are rewarded by more EC votes (as examples seen in 2012) or with less as population falls
- the system may be unfair to third party candidates but they are never likely to win the presidency in a two-party system and a first past the post system as their vote is either too small or too widely dispersed. They cannot achieve 19% of the presidency (as Perot gained 19% of the votes in 1992)
- Strong students will also recognise that although criticisms are made of the ‘faithless electors’ they are rare and have *never* made a difference to the outcome of an election
- students may also argue, in defence of the system, that there are no agreed or acceptable alternatives to the EC system, nor any ‘perfect’ system for electing a US president, so the EC system does remain ‘by far’ the best method.

The overall AO1/AO2 marks will relate to the strong or weak coverage of these arguments. Generally, the more convincing analysis and evidence presented, the higher the overall mark.

For top-level marks students *must* come to a conclusion relating to the said question. They may refer to the fact that there has been no serious challenge to the EC system from either the electorate or the states themselves (via constitutional amendment) despite ‘blips’ such as the much criticised 2000 outcome, suggesting satisfaction with the provisions for the election of the US’s only national office, laid down by the Constitution.

Some students may spend time describing alternative methods such as the system found in Maine or Nebraska amongst others. Whilst this may have some AO1 relevance it should not take over the response and must be clearly related to the question, not simply long descriptions of alternatives.

At lower levels of response expect simple, inaccurate descriptions of the EC with little convincing analysis, few examples or evidence and little focus on the question.

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

(03) Identify and outline the main divisions within the Democratic Party.	(10 marks)
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In response to this question students should demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of the ideological *intra-party* divisions and factions within the more liberal Democratic Party. They may use key concepts such as ‘internal coalitions’ or ‘big tent’ parties found in the US system, where inevitably the parties will display sometimes deep ideological divisions and Democrats may display very different values and principles on policy issues. For higher-level marks, students must be very clear as to what these divisions are and some of the policies on which the Democratic Party divides, with examples and evidence to demonstrate them. It is likely that students will refer, with a greater or lesser degree of clarity and understanding, to divisions such as those between:

- liberal Democrats on the left of the party such as Nancy Pelosi who have liberal views on most social and fiscal policy whether on tax or on welfare or gay marriage. They are socially and economically liberal and most represent more liberal states such as California or states and districts in New England. They may refer at the higher levels of response to the progressive levels in Congress
- more conservative Democrats (often referred to as ‘Blue Dog Democrats’ or DINOS – Democrats in name only – the use of such terms should be rewarded) such as Ben Nelson from Nebraska who tend to have both fiscally and socially conservative views such as low taxes and spending and anti-abortion or pro-gun views. These Democrats tend to represent more conservative states or districts such as those in the south or the mid-west.
- centrist New Democrats, such as Bill Clinton, who take a more moderate and pragmatic position on most policy issues and were found in the Democratic Leadership Council.

Top-level students may refer in their answer to the ‘New Deal Coalition’ and the Democratic Party’s attempts to hold the different factions within the party (and being successful from the 1930s to the 1960s).

At the very highest level of response expect evidence and examples of the above divisions and the difficulties involved in holding together such diverse views within a party, but how necessary this is for electoral success.

Reward students who explain that such internal divisions can cause conflicts within Congress between members of the same party who are voting in different ways. Some may also refer to Obama’s difficulties in holding the Democratic Party to an agreed line on important issues such as health care or the stimulus. Excellent students may point to the more liberal Democratic Party and greater partisanship in Congress.

(04) ‘Despite the vast diversity of the USA, two parties continue to dominate the political system.’ Discuss.	(30 marks)
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The question is picking up on the continuing paradox in American politics that sees a country of huge diversity – socio-economic/racial/ethnic/religious/regional – with only two parties continuing to represent that diversity at both state and federal levels of government. AO1 evidence may be given of this, such as the Democratic and Republican dominance of the Presidency, Congress and State legislatures in every state by these parties both historically and today.

Some students may describe US diversity in more detail as the question invites. They may give evidence such as the racial make-up of the population or the huge regional divisions in the 'red and blue' states, the special role of the South in American politics, the huge divisions between black and white, north and south, rich and poor, Protestant and Catholic but **still** only two parties represent all these groups, not several as in many other *less diverse* countries such as the UK with its third and minor parties such as the Liberal Democrats or the various Nationalist parties.

The question may be approached in two main ways, both equally worthy of credit. The focus of the answer should be on the reasons why the two parties are so strong and long lasting ('*continue* to dominate') and this is likely to be the focus of stronger students as the quotation refers to 'two parties' dominating the system. In this evaluation, students will gain high AO1 and AO2 marks if they explain some or most of the following:

- the strength of partisan alignment or party identification with these parties both historically and today, passed on through political socialisation as a historical duopoly has existed since the early days of the Republic
- the tendency of most political issues to fall into a yes/no, left/right, for/against category with two sides
- the financial and campaigning advantages of the two parties
- the simple plurality, first past the post electoral system which favours the two main parties and the Electoral College which also favours the party or parties with the most concentrated support and presents difficulties for any candidates trying to make a breakthrough in a long established system
- the fact that the two parties are in effect 'internal coalitions', big tent parties covering all parts of the political spectrum from liberal left to conservative right thus leaving little 'ideological space' for other parties to gain votes.

In response to this question, although most students will be achieving their marks through explanations of continuing two-party dominance, some students may also refer in their response to the concomitant difficulties faced by third parties in breaking into this duopoly. This, however, should **not** take over the question as this is not a question focusing on why third parties do not succeed. Students who only refer to this in their response will be unlikely to reach above Level 2 or bottom Level 3. However, the following evaluation is worthy of some credit in a response:

- the difficulties faced by third party and independent candidates in breaking the duopoly, using arguments such as lack of funding/lack of ballot access/lack of media attention/lack of name recognition/inability to make an electoral breakthrough because of the electoral system/the big tent nature of the parties apart from at the extremes and well established parties familiar to the electorate.

It is possible that some students may challenge the idea of parties 'dominating' the system by referring to candidates who have made some kind of impact such as Perot in 1992 and Nader in 2000. They may also refer to the success of some independent candidates within the dominant two party system, such as Bernie Sanders in Vermont or Joe Lieberman in Connecticut. However, they may also know that both Senators caucus with the Democrats in Congress.

Some excellent students may refer to the debate that in reality the US does not have a pure two party system as there are, in effect, 100 parties as each party is organised differently in each state.

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

(05) Consider the importance of the age of US voters as a factor influencing voting behaviour.
(10 marks)

Age is simply one *long-term or primacy social factor* that impacts on the way that a voter casts his/her vote. For high AO1 marks expect students to give accurate statistical **evidence** of the way in which party/candidate support varies according to the age of the voter, largely because of the different values and expectations associated with different voting age groups.

There are some very clear differences, seen in all recent elections – mid-term and presidential – to demonstrate that voters in different age groups distribute their support differently.

Strong students are likely to show evidence that *younger* voters (18-29) are more likely to vote Democrat such as 66% of 18-29 year-olds and 68% of first time voters voted Democrat in 2008, and older voters are disproportionately likely to vote Republican (this was especially seen in the 2010 mid-terms).

Excellent students may know that there is *differential turnout* in the two groups with older voters much more likely to turn out to vote and younger voters to abstain. They may argue that this leads to more attention being paid to older rather than younger voters by candidates as they make up a much larger proportion of the voting electorate and are more likely to vote. This should be rewarded at both AO1 and AO2.

It is unlikely that students will achieve above Level 2 at AO1 without convincing statistical evidence in the answer.

For high AO2 marks expect some analysis of the *reasons* for different VB in different age groups:

- younger voters are likely to be more socially liberal on issues such as abortion or gay marriage and are focussed more on education and jobs
- older voters are concerned more with health care and retirement provisions and are more likely to have a partisan alignment
- middle-aged voters are more concerned with fiscal issues such as tax.

At the very highest level of response students may conclude that age is simply one factor among many that influence VB and that it very hard to disentangle age as a factor from *other* influencing factors such as socio-economic status, race and gender and may not be as significant as these other related factors. Do not reward responses that stray into other social factors effecting voting behaviour. The focus of the response must be on age.

(06) 'Democratic overload is the main cause of the high abstention levels in US elections.'
Discuss. (30 marks)

This question invites students to address the debate over the **causes** of high abstention in US elections at all levels and tiers of government, federal, state and local. It posits the argument that it is '*democratic overload*' which is the *main cause* of high abstention and students may agree or disagree with this statement using analysis, evidence and examples.

Initially it is likely that students will explain – with a greater or lesser degree of accuracy – what the term ‘democratic overload’ actually means, probably referring to the huge number of elections for numerous offices in the US from ‘president down to dog-catcher’ caused by the federal system, the separation of powers, fixed presidential and mid-term elections as well as a widespread system of primary elections used to select candidates. They may argue that the very large number of elections in the US therefore leads to ‘voter fatigue’ and subsequent abstention.

Strong students at the higher level of response for AO1 must be able to offer convincing statistical evidence relating to turnout in different elections and although this turnout does *vary* between elections at different times, evidence shows that:

- at presidential elections turnout has been between 49% and 63% in elections since the 1970s
- at mid-term elections the turnout is usually between 30 and 40%
- in primary elections turnout hovers between 20 and 30%.

It is possible that students may attempt explanations for any *fluctuations* in turnout, for example why it may be very low as in 1996 (uninspiring candidates and few salient issues) and why it may go up as in 2008 (an inspiring candidate and serious economic issues) and they should be rewarded if these are **convincing**.

Students may present an argument suggesting that the frequency and number of US elections is certainly a *contributing factor* to high abstention, but to reach the higher mark levels on both AO1 and AO2 they must analyse **several other variables** isolated by psephologists as also being contributory factors to high abstention such as:

- arguments relating to complex registration requirements and the high levels of geographical mobility in US society. Here, very strong students may explain the concept of the *voting age population* and compare it with the actual turnout
- arguments involving disillusionment and alienation from the political and/or electoral system. To gain higher marks students must at least attempt some explanation of **why** voters may be disillusioned or alienated (rather than simple assertion) such as the lack of choice of ideology or policy positions/unimpressive candidates as in 2000/the EC system which leads to wasted votes/the electoral process dominated by media, money, image, negative advertising and ‘spin’, amongst others. Weaker students may simply argue that voters are ‘apathetic’ or ‘bored’ as an explanation but this should not be rewarded without any convincing explanation of *why* they may be
- it is possible to argue that some voters may abstain because of high levels of *satisfaction* with the system lowering turnout, eg as in 1996 referred to as ‘happathy’.

At the higher levels of response students may refer to attempts to raise turnout in the US such as the Motor Voter Act and the Help America Vote Act of 2002 which brought about provisions for earlier and easier voting.

It may also be likely that some students may give reasons for the *higher turnout* in 2008 and attempt explanations for this such as the Obama candidacy and the extensive ‘get out the vote’ operation at that election. They may also legitimately refer to ‘differential abstention’ by pointing to the differences in turnout amongst different social groups, stating which groups are *more* likely to turn out to vote such as the elderly and the higher socio-economic groups and those *less* likely to, such as the young, minorities and lower socio-economic groups.

For higher-level marks there **must be** statistical and psephological evidence presented to back up the analysis that is being made.

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

(07) Explain why US political culture encourages pressure group activity.	(10 marks)
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In response to this question students must focus on **why** US political culture is so conducive or favourable to the activities of pressure groups (perhaps synoptically compared to the UK) and why there **is** so much pressure group activity and so many pressure groups active in the system. For higher-level marks expect knowledge and analysis of some (lower AO1 and AO2 marks) or many (higher AO1 and AO2 marks) of the following reasons:

- the system of government with its multiple *access points* created by a *federal system* with a *separation of powers* within it. This must be **explained** for higher-level marks. This encourages lobbying through different power centres such as the legislature, executive and judiciary at both state and federal level where decisions are made
- the much *more open* system of government and traditions of lobbying, campaigning and protest such as the Civil Rights Movement or street demonstrations
- guaranteed *constitutional rights*, particularly First Amendment rights of freedom of speech and assembly and the right to ‘petition the government for redress of grievances’
- the weaker party system leads to more openings for pressure groups to ‘fill the gaps’
- the campaign finance system encourages pressure groups to be involved in raising election finance for candidates and is an accepted and traditional part of financing elections
- the initiative process used in some states encourages group activity.

For high marks the focus of the answer must be on the amenability of *US political culture* to pressure group activity and should **not** stray into wider areas of pressure group activity itself.

(08) Analyse why some US pressure groups are more successful than others in achieving their aims and objectives.	(30 marks)
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This question must focus on the numerous variables involved in explaining the success (or lack of) US pressure groups. Students who remain focused on the explanations of why some groups are more successful than others with backing evidence and examples should be able to access the higher mark levels.

Weaker students may simply write generically on US pressure groups with little focus on the precise question. Excellent answers may question what is meant by ‘success’ – is it legislative action or public support, for example?

Students may choose to introduce their answers with some definition of pressure groups and explanations of the activities they are involved in when trying to achieve their aims/objectives. It should be understood that not all pressure groups active in US politics achieve their aims at all times. Some are usually successful and others rarely so. It is expected that for higher AO1 and AO2 marks that students will be able to demonstrate that whether pressure groups are ‘successful’ or whether they are not, and whether they *always* are or *sometimes* are or *never* are will depend on a number of important explaining factors which can be interlinked. Generally the marks will depend on how many of these factors are evaluated in the response and the quality and quantity of the backing evidence and examples.

The kind of analysis required when analysing why some pressure groups achieve ‘success’ more than others is likely to be connected to the following analysis (to a greater or lesser extent) in students’ responses:

- their ‘access’ to decision-makers at both federal and state level and through the numerous ‘access points’ of US government, explaining, for higher marks, *why* some groups may achieve this access and others can’t. This involves understanding of the terms ‘insider’ and ‘outsider’ groups in the US context and whether groups pursue ‘insider strategies’ (more successful therefore) or are forced to use ‘outsider’ methods such as direct action (therefore less successful). *Examples* should be given of such methods and groups pursuing them
- the extent of their lobbying activities, employment of lobbyists, knowledge (AO1) and explanation (AO2) of the ‘revolving door’ syndrome and the level of their expertise and specialist knowledge helping them to influence ‘inside’ government, eg testifying before congressional committees on highly specialised areas of policy
- whether they have a large or small role in financing campaigns of congressional candidates and helping to get them elected through PACs and campaign contributions (now made easier for corporations and unions through the Supreme Court decisions *FEC v Citizens United* 2010)
- their membership – its size/financial contributions/commitment/involvement, eg NRA small but committed; AARP large membership but less involved. Both can lead to success because of their voting support in states and districts
- whether their aim has public support or not, or is actively opposed or not by a countervailing group with opposite views which serves to weaken their influence and therefore ‘success’
- a further strong argument would be analysis of which party controls the presidency or Congress and whether and why the Democrats or Republicans would be sympathetic with their aims. Examples should be given of groups that would prefer a Republican administration and those preferring a Democrat one as this will impact on a group’s ‘success’ or lack of it.
- excellent responses should *explain* the formation of ‘Iron Triangles’ or ‘Issue Networks’ relating this to ‘success’
- some students may legitimately refer to groups targeting the Supreme Court through ‘amicus curiae’ briefs or test cases to bring about what they want, and examples of groups who have been successful using this method such as the NAACP during the Civil Rights era.

The marks will relate to a student’s success in covering the above kind of arguments. It is expected that the overall mark will be higher if the answer contains **convincing examples** of pressure group activities in these areas and *whether* and *why* this led to some specific ‘success’, such as that of the NRA in gun control or the AARP in subsidies for Medicare or prescription drugs (amongst many other similar examples that could be used).

It would also be possible to analyse the ‘lack of success’ of pressure groups that have failed to achieve their aims such as the pro-life groups in overturning *Roe v Wade* (amongst many other examples). Some may argue that certain groups always get their way because of their advantages, whilst others rarely do and that this is not always related to the ‘justness’ of their cause or interest. It is likely at the top end of the responses that students will demonstrate a strong understanding of how pressure group politics actually operates in the US. At the bottom end this is likely to be absent.

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