

A-LEVEL

Government and Politics

GOV3A – The Politics of the USA

Mark scheme

2151

June 2015

V1 Final Mark Scheme

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

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.

Further copies of this Mark scheme are available from aqa.org.uk

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.

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. There are frequent errors of spelling, punctuation and grammar, and legibility may be a problem.</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>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
AO1	AO2	AO3
<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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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 which 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

(01) Identify and explain the differences between primary elections and the caucus system in the US presidential nomination process.

[10 marks]

Students at all levels of response are likely to demonstrate an understanding of what primaries and caucuses are. For high AO1 and AO2 marks, students must recognise the differences between primaries and caucuses both in terms of how both relate to the selection and nomination process; their prevalence (more States use primaries than caucuses) and their overall significance. AO1 and AO2 marks will depend on how well responses identify which kind of state holds primaries or caucuses, who votes in them and with what results. It can be expected that some students will use evidence from the Republican nomination battle of 2012. This knowledge and analysis would be expected in level 3 and 4 responses.

For AO1 marks students may be expected to refer to some of the following:

- Caucuses are a series of state-based meetings of Democratic and Republican Party activists [or strong party identifiers]. They are found in only a few states that tend to be the smaller and less densely populated, such as North Dakota or Wyoming. Most are likely to explain 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 (the “big mo”, i.e. name recognition, winner status, media attention and a boost to campaign funding) to candidates who win here.
- A primary is an intra-party election to select a party’s nominee for the presidency, where ordinary voters vote for their preferred candidate rather than the choice being made by party bosses or activists. It is likely that students will identify that primaries can be “open” or “closed”. They are highly democratic devices compared to the earlier selection processes involving choices made by party bosses in ‘smoke filled rooms’. Some students may wish to argue that primaries weed out unsuitable candidates for the presidency and that they test the candidates’ stamina on the long campaign trail and their fund-raising and oratorical skills. It is likely that students will know that New Hampshire is the first presidential primary in the season and regarded as the most important primary to win.

For AO2 marks students should give evidence that caucuses show the views of the party activists in both parties and tend to be dominated by more ideological views – the liberal left in the Democratic Party and to the conservative right in the Republican Party. Students may argue that caucuses 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.

The best responses to this question must focus on explaining the differences between the two selection methods in the nomination process rather than simply describing what each does. Weaker students at Level 2 may not get beyond simple or unclear definitions. Analysis of factors such as the different types of voter involved and the different outcomes of each process is likely at AO2 Level 3 and 4 and should be credited.

(02) 'An eighteenth-century process still used for the election of the twenty-first-century president.' Critically evaluate this view of the Electoral College.

[30 marks]

The extent of AO1 marks will be linked to why the EC system was set up as an *indirect* way of electing the president and how it works (538 votes, 270 to win and how votes are allocated).

Students may show awareness of the **criticisms** made of the EC and its workings as well as discussing the advantages of the EC.

The criticisms of the EC are likely to include some, but necessarily not all, of the following themes:

- 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.

Some students may argue that such criticisms, backed up by necessary examples and evidence, actually do support an argument that the EC is not the best method of electing the president. However, candidates who achieve level 3 and 4 are likely to cover both sides of the debate. A defence of the EC system is likely to use much of the following analysis:

- despite vote distortions, the EC has produced winners 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 using a first-past-the-post electoral system as their vote is either too small or too widely dispersed – as seen with Wallace in 1968 and Perot 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, nor any 'perfect' system for electing a US president, so the EC does remain 'by far' the best method.

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 dominate responses and must be clearly related to the question.

For top-level marks students **must** come to a conclusion - they may refer to the fact that there has been no serious challenge to the EC system from either the US 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.

Topic 2 Political Parties

(03) Consider how accurate it is to describe the USA as having a two-party system.

[10 marks]

The standard view 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. It is acceptable to reward discussion of the **reasons** for this two-party dominance but this should not dominate responses. Students, when explaining the dominance of the two main parties, could include some of the following but it would not be necessary for students to cover all of these themes:

- the operation of the first-past-the-post, simple plurality system for congressional elections and the operation of the electoral college for the election of the president.
- the strength and endurance of party identification.
- the finance of the two main parties.
- their 'big tent', catch-all centrist appeal which also covers the liberal and conservative choices of the voters.

However, students must be able to explain why this description may not be fully '*accurate*' when describing the US party system. This may be done in a number of ways, at least two of which should be covered for higher levels of response:

- 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), that have offered some choice to American voters in some presidential elections, and currently 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.
- 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.

(04) 'The two main US parties are now more ideologically distinct and internally united than in the past'. Discuss.

[30 marks]

The focus of the question relates to differences between (inter) the parties in *ideology*, including their *core principles* and values and the *policies* that stem from these, as well as each party's growing internal ideological *cohesion*.

The traditional description of the two main US parties was that there were more *intra* than *inter*-party differences. Both US parties are changing in many ways but a broad coalition description is accurate to some extent, with their 'catch-all' 'umbrella' nature alongside a more *pragmatic* desire to win elections rather than ideological purity. Students may wish to 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, the main focus of higher level responses should be on the *changing* ideological nature of the two parties and the *growing* ideological gulf that **now** separates them. It is no longer possible to argue that they are like 'two empty bottles' or 'only separated by abortion' and students should be given limited credit for pursuing this line of argument.

Higher-level responses demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the '*distinct*' *ideological views* which now separate the parties; it is likely that students will focus on some or all of the following policy themes – economic, social and foreign policy. For example, there are divisions over the *role and scope of government intervention*, such as the Democrats' focus on the positive and activist role of government ('Big government') to bring about social and economic changes such as the support for welfare and the more equal distribution of wealth. Hence the recent health care reforms and stimulus spending supported by *most* Democrats or the welfare reforms they support. For this reason they are perceived as the 'tax and spend' party.

This could be contrasted with the Republicans' support for 'small government' and free markets, less government intervention in the economy and low taxes, low spending and balanced budgets. Hence their total opposition to health care reform and almost total opposition to bailouts and Keynesian spending programmes and strong support for private enterprise. Fiscal conservatism now dominates the party.

This means there is now a very wide divide between the parties. The Democrat Party now has more liberal economic views, especially since the loss of its more conservative 'southern wing' since the 1960s. While, the Republican Party has now much more conservative economic views, since the Reagan presidency, and more recently under the growing influence of the more fiscally (and socially) conservative Tea Party Movement, which has pushed the Republican Party further to the right. Such references would be expected from students at the higher levels of response.

The term 'internally united' must also be addressed. Better responses are likely to argue that because there is greater ideological unity within the parties today and stronger ideological differences between them (evidenced by reference to greater party unity and voting in Congress and divisive electoral campaigns at Level 3 and certainly Level 4), then it follows that there are *fewer* internal divisions and factions *within* the parties, especially when compared to the past. At

the higher levels of response this should be explained by the previously outlined changes to the parties and the decline of their conservative (Democratic) and moderate (Republican) wings.

High levels of response may also refer to congressional groupings such as the *decline* of the fiscally and socially conservative Blue Dog Democrats (dropping to 23 from 54 members after the 2010 mid-terms) and the decline of more moderate, 'compassionate' conservatives (promised by Bush in the 2000 campaign and seen in the 'No Child Left Behind Act') in the Republican Party.

Weaker responses may fail to focus on the question and write generically on the parties, with little up to date or accurate evidence on the changes that have taken place in party ideology in recent years. Such responses at levels 3 and 4 are unlikely to move beyond Level 2.

Responses at levels 3 and 4 are likely to argue/conclude that US parties, because of their *decentralised* nature within a federal system, are always going to be, to some extent, internal coalitions of beliefs because of the very different voters and states that they represent.

Topic 3 Voting Behaviour

(05) Explain the term ‘democratic overload’ in the context of US voting behaviour.

[10 marks]

Students at all levels of response are likely to demonstrate an understanding that the term relates to the very large number of elections in the US connected to the working of the constitution itself with presidential elections every four years and mid-terms every two years. For high AO1 and AO2 marks, students will recognise that this is because of federalism which means that there are also elections at the state level for state legislatures and Governors and at local level also. Americans are sometimes said to vote for everything from the ‘president to the local dog-catcher’ and it is this fact that has led to the idea of ‘democratic overload’ and the related term of ‘voter fatigue’.

It can be expected that students will suggest that this is one reason for the low turnouts of US elections. It may also be noted at the higher level of response that apart from the federal and state elections there are also the primary and caucus elections and increasingly voters are invited to vote on initiatives, propositions at local level and in recall elections such as those in California in 2003 and in Wisconsin and Colorado in 2013.

Strong students at the higher level of response for AO1 may offer 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 not necessary for the highest marks but some students may argue that the situation in the USA could be contrasted with other democracies, such as the UK, where the opportunities to vote are far more restricted - this argument should be rewarded.

(06) “The factors that influence voters are varied, complex and difficult to predict.” Discuss.

[30 marks]

There are three elements to this question that allow for a consideration of the main variables affecting the way people vote in the US, their relative importance and the extent to which voting patterns are **stable** and **predictable**. Although it is not necessary to deal with all aspects of the question equally, all must be addressed to access the higher AO1 and AO2 mark bands.

Students can focus upon the importance of the words ‘varied’, ‘complex’ and ‘difficult to predict’, all of which imply that US voting behaviour is not straightforward to explain and that there are many different variables involved and a complex interaction of these numerous factors.

For high AO1 and AO2 marks students must pick up on the debate over whether voting behaviour is more influenced by the long-term ‘primacy’ factors connected to the voters’ social characteristics (socio-economic status, region, age, gender, religious affiliation or race/ethnicity) or whether

short-term 'recency' factors, such as the different candidates standing for election or the political issues and events that are different at each election, are more important in influencing voting intentions.

There could also be reference, in the context of complexity, to the influence of region and where the voters live, as there is well-documented evidence that voters from the South vote differently from voters in the North-East states, or in the West compared to the Mid-West. Because of the US electoral system with different elections taking place at different levels and for the different branches of government, students may introduce the concept of split ticket voting to show complexity as voters vote for different parties and candidates on the same ticket.

Students when addressing predictability should focus on explanations for partisanship and partisan alignment, with supporting evidence from psephological studies of US voting behaviour. This would include the greater degree of voting support for the Democratic Party from lower socio-economic groups/females/racial and ethnic minorities/Catholics, Jews and secular voters/younger voters/urban voters in NE and coastal states (Blue America). This could be compared with the higher degree of voting support for the Republican Party from higher socio-economic groups/males/white voters/protestant and evangelical Christians/older voters/rural suburban voters in middle America and the south (Red America).

Alternatively students may focus on short term factors, including the increasing importance of candidate voting relating to the important influence of the media in focusing on candidates and their image and personalised politics. Recent presidential elections suggest that for some voters there is also increasing attention paid to the importance of salient issues such as economic issues or abortion, gun control, etc. Students may also discuss retrospective voting and how voters respond to changing candidates and issues on the political agenda.

All these factors add to the complexity of voter choice in the USA and should be backed up with relevant evidence and examples, including voting statistics and reference to the way the voters voted in specific elections. Examples and evidence of such influences would be expected as the results of elections are a **combination** of long-term and short-term factors impacting on voters: for example, 'It's the economy, stupid' in 1992 and 2008, or the 'national security' post-9/11 election of 2004, also dominated by the social issues of abortion and gay marriage ('wedge issues'), or the 'hope and change' message of Obama in 2008 after the economic crisis and bank bail-outs and the dominance of economic issues again in 2012. Students may also refer to the impact of different candidates and their characteristics on voting behaviours in recent elections, or events such as 9/11 and the war on terror in 2004 or Hurricane Sandy in 2012.

As this is a voting behaviour question for students to reach Levels 3 and 4 psephological vocabulary, explanations, and supporting statistical evidence are all necessary. Responses that are over-generalised or simplistic assertions should be placed at the bottom of Level 2.

For high marks a fully supported conclusion should be reached. Some students may argue that it is social factors, while others that it is candidates and issues that are most important, although most students are likely to argue that it is a combination of the two kinds of factors at work in each election, giving supporting evidence from voting patterns from recent elections. Overall, students may argue that despite the complex nature of US voting behaviour it is far from being difficult to predict.

Topic 4 Pressure Groups

(07) Explain how the US political system encourages pressure group activity.

[10 marks]

In response to this question students must focus on **how** the US political system is so encouraging or favourable to the activities of pressure groups and why there **is** so much pressure group activity and so many pressure groups are active in the US.

For higher-level marks expect knowledge and analysis of reasons such as the following:

- 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. Students are likely to argue that the system of government helps promote 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 via PACs and Super-PACS.
- Direct-democracy and the initiative process used in some states encourages group activity.

Students may wish to make synoptic points comparing the US and the UK – they may, when referring to the large number of access points in the US system, compare this to the UK with its unitary system and a fusion of legislative and executive powers and a Supreme Court with much less power than its US counterpart. This is one reason why US pressure groups have more favourable conditions in which to try to influence decision-making. However, whilst this is creditworthy, it is not essential for high marks.

For high marks the focus of the answer must be on how the system encourages pressure group activity and should **not** stray into wider themes relating to pressure group methods.

(08) Critically assess the methods used by US pressure groups to achieve their aims and objectives.

[30 marks]

The question relates to pressure group methods by which thousands of different pressure groups try and carry out their aims and objectives within the US political system, with its different branches and levels of government (both federal and state level).

There are many examples of these methods that students may select and part of the AO2 mark would be explaining why different pressure groups use different methods at different times. It can be expected that all responses will display knowledge and understanding of pressure groups and this may include a brief definition of the various types of pressure groups and the methods used. It

is important that responses should include a good range of well worked examples of pressure groups to support arguments.

For AO1 marks expect students to make reference to election campaign contributions, the publication of voting records, lobbying, the revolving door syndrome, “pay to play” arguments, 527 groups, and PACs/Super PACs.

For AO2 marks students need to analyse a range of factors that are likely to lead to success for pressure groups. These may include membership (size, quality and commitment), money/resources, media support, and insider status as linked to iron triangle and policy networks analysis. The best responses will attempt to evaluate and possibly rank the factors rather than merely listing them.

It is likely that the following would be the methods selected for analysis:

- Lobbying activities. This would entail knowledge of how, where and why pressure groups lobby political institutions (access points), such as the different branches of government and at the different levels of government in the USA. Examples of pressure groups using these methods would be necessary for high marks, such as: lobbying Congress (House and Senate) and the congressional committees to gain access to the legislative process to try to influence outcomes; lobbying the executive branch of government to try to influence the initiation of policy or its implementation through the federal bureaucracy; lobbying the judicial branch by presenting *amicus curiae* briefs or attempting to influence the selection and confirmation of judges.

Because the question requires an assessment of methods to gain high marks, students must present some critique of lobbying, the ‘revolving door’ of influence, the significance of groups in the K Street corridor gaining access to decision-making through financial donations (high level responses may refer to the Abramoff lobbying scandal in 2006) or the criticisms made of ‘Iron Triangles’ in the policy process. The latter is likely at the very highest level of response.

- Electoral activities. Students may analyse the methods of electoral funding of candidates through Political Action Committees and offer a critique of the ‘buying’ of political influence through this method, which advantages the well-financed pressure groups and can be used to gain access denied to other less-well-financed groups. Students may also offer a critical evaluation of negative campaigning through TV advertising against candidates, or the ‘targeting’ of elected representatives. Excellent responses may refer to the *FEC v Citizens United* Supreme Court decision in 2010 that lifted restrictions on corporate and union spending in support of, or opposition to, candidates.
- The Initiative process. The methods used by pressure groups to influence the outcome of direct democracy, such as initiatives and propositions, can be described and criticised: for example, the ‘buying’ of petition signatures, the dominance of pressure group financing of the campaigns (eg pressure group campaigns to defeat same-sex marriage initiatives).
- Direct action. It is likely that all students will define direct action as a form of pressure group activity that focuses on the use of non-violent or violent physical protest. Higher levels of response could argue that demonstrations and marches are very common in the USA (due to 1st amendment rights and its political culture/traditions). Some responses may identify that some pressure groups are forced to use these tactics because unlike other groups they

have no access to decision-makers at Federal or State level. Students may also argue that an increased willingness to engage in direct action is often associated with outside pressure groups dissatisfied traditional forms of protest or with the work of elected representatives. It is likely that responses will argue that sometimes campaigns and demonstrations can rebound and alienate the public. Students are likely to use some of the following examples to illustrate their arguments; the civil rights campaign of the 1950s and 1960s, anti-war demonstrations during the Vietnam war and more recently with Iraq, the Million Mom March in 2000 over guns, the picketing of abortion clinics by some pro-life groups in the 1980s and 1990s and the Occupy Wall Street anti-capitalist protests of 2011.

At the lower levels of response, students may simply write generically about US pressure groups and their activities or simply describe pressure group methods or why some groups are more successful than others. For higher-level marks, there must be a clear focus on the methods used by different pressure groups, with examples of different groups and why they use these methods.

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