



A-LEVEL

Government and Politics

GOV3A The Politics of the USA

Mark scheme

June 2016

Version: 1.0 Final

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. 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 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>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. A conclusion, where appropriate, may be offered but its relationship to the preceding discussion is modest or implicit.</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>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)</p> <p>The student demonstrates a comprehensive knowledge and understanding of political concepts/theories/institutions and processes and the relationships between them.</p> <p>A synoptic approach is fully developed, drawing appropriately on knowledge, perspectives and examples from a wide range of studies in government and politics.</p> <p>The answer fully addresses the requirements of the question and demonstrates excellent contextual awareness.</p> <p>The answer includes excellent examples to illustrate points made.</p> <p>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)</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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)</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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)</p> <p>The student demonstrates sound knowledge and understanding of political concepts/theories/institutions and processes and the relationships between them.</p> <p>A synoptic approach is well developed using a range of knowledge, perspectives and examples gained elsewhere in the study of government and politics.</p> <p>The answer clearly addresses the requirements of the question and demonstrates sound contextual awareness.</p> <p>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)</p> <p>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)</p> <p>The student communicates arguments, explanations and conclusions well. Good use is made of political vocabulary to construct clear arguments and explanations.</p> <p>The response should be legible but there may be occasional errors of spelling, punctuation and grammar.</p> <p>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)</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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)</p> <p>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)</p> <p>The student communicates arguments and conclusions adequately, with a limited use of political vocabulary.</p> <p>There are frequent errors of spelling, punctuation and grammar and legibility may be a problem.</p> <p>A conclusion is offered but its relationship to the preceding discussion may be modest or implicit.</p>
<p>Level 1 (1–3 marks)</p> <p>The student demonstrates a slight and incomplete knowledge and understanding of political institutions and processes and a limited awareness of the relationships between them.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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)</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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)</p> <p>The answer relies upon narrative which is not fully coherent. There is little or no use of political vocabulary.</p> <p>Errors in spelling, punctuation and grammar may be intrusive and the response may not be legible.</p> <p>A conclusion, if present, is not adequately related to the preceding discussion.</p>
<p>0 marks</p> <p>No relevant response.</p>	<p>0 marks</p> <p>No relevant response.</p>	<p>0 marks</p> <p>No relevant response</p>

Topic 1: The Electoral Process and Direct Democracy

0 1 Explain the significance of a ‘balanced ticket’ in US presidential elections.

[10 marks]

Students should recognise that presidential candidates at the end of the primary process select their vice presidential nominee and present this nominee at the NNCs to the party. This will be done with the aim to ‘balance the ticket’ that is to be presented to the voters at the presidential election in order to **maximise** their potential vote in the November election. Generally, the presidential nominee will select a V-P with different characteristics to their own given the ideological, religious, regional and ethnic diversity of the US and the V-P should bring something **different** to the ticket to appeal to different groups of voters.

For higher AO2 marks principle and purpose of ticket balancing should be clearly understood. The selection of a V-P is done to try and maximise the potential vote of the ticket by the selection of a candidate who has different characteristics to the nominee and can bring something to the ticket that is not already there, in order to maximise the appeal of the ticket to a greater range of voters in a broader voting coalition.

For both high level AO1 and AO2 marks students must give examples of ticket balancing from past elections. The concept of ‘balance’ should, therefore, be understood in terms of ideological balance (liberal or conservative); geographical balance (from the liberal north or the more conservative south); religious balance (Protestant, Catholic, Jew etc.); or ethnic balance. Some responses may also reference ‘balance’ in terms of trying to attract swing voters or secure the support of voters in States with large EC votes. In recent elections the balance has also been to do with Washington insider or outsider status with Bush/Cheney – McCain/Palin being good examples. Specific evidence is required of several of these factors for the highest level marks at both AO1 and AO2:

- Obama’s selection of Biden in 2008 balanced his race, age and lack of Washington experience and was aimed at attracting white, male blue-collar voters.
- Romney’s choice of the Tea-party conservative Paul Ryan was intended to balance his more moderate record as governor of Massachusetts and reassure conservative voters.

However, the selection of vice-presidential candidates from previous elections such as Clinton-Gore (where the ticket was **NOT** significantly balanced with two similar southern “New” Democrats) or Kennedy/Johnson is acceptable as long as students are able to demonstrate why the choices were made and why they were “significant”.

Although V-P selection is regarded as important in gaining additional votes, at the highest level of response some students may legitimately challenge the “significance” of the second on the ticket, as a more popular V-P candidate will not save a less popular presidential candidate from defeat. The lack of significance of the office itself may also be brought into the analysis and such a response should be rewarded at AO2.

0 2 Evaluate the use of recalls, referendums and initiatives as forms of direct democracy in the USA.

[30 marks]

The question asks students to assess the use of direct democracy in the US. The extent of AO1 marks will be linked to how far students understand and can demonstrate knowledge of the process of direct democracy found in many (but not all) US states (but not nationally because of the lack of constitutional provision for their use) through the initiative (propositions), referendum and recall processes. For AO2 marks students must offer an appraisal of each of the methods.

Initiatives and Referendums AO1:

- 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).
- 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 bond issues as a way of raising money for state finances). All states (except Delaware) require amendments to their constitutions to be approved by referendum.
- Initiatives 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.

Recalls AO1:

A recall is a procedure that allows citizens to remove and replace a public official before the end of a term of office. Students could also be expected to refer to the following:

- Recall elections are held as a result of recall petitions (which vary) from registered voters to remove an elected official from office between elections.
- Recall elections are used (very rarely) in **19 states only**, with no provision made at the federal level. Students should not be rewarded if they refer to recall of Members of Congress.
- Arguments concerning accountability and making politicians answer for possible corruption or incompetence between elections, thus giving more power and control to the electorate over elected representatives or officials.

For AO2 marks, students must offer evaluation of each of the methods and a critique of their Democratic value.

Initiatives and Referendums AO2:

Both devices are not without their critics and may *not* be as democratic as they at first appear. For high Level 3 and 4 marks students are likely to 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.

When discussing Referendums students 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, students 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. Students may refer to Proposition 19 on cannabis in California in 2010 or the fact that in 2014 US voters approved measures on minimum wage levels, marijuana, sentencing reform, gun control, fracking, and abortion policy, all via the ballot initiative process.

Recalls AO2:

- Arguments concerning the possible undermining of elected representatives and responsible politicians through frivolous recall petitions, financed by their partisan opponents who failed to defeat them in a free and fair election. Recall petitions could also discourage the taking of bold but unpopular decisions.
- To illustrate arguments it can be expected that students will use the example of the successful recall of Democratic Governor Gray Davis in 2003 and the subsequent election won by Republican Arnold Schwarzenegger. While not necessary for the highest marks some well-prepared students may use evidence of recalls from 2013. Scott Walker the Republican governor of Wisconsin won a fiercely contested recall [the first governor to win a recall in US political history] – also in 2013 Colorado saw the successful recall of two State Senators; John Morse and Angela Giron, both lost recalls following their support of strict new gun control legislation. It is not necessary for the highest marks but some students may be aware that recall elections have been proposed for the UK, although not yet acted upon – this argument should be rewarded.

AO3 marks on this question must be awarded to reflect the extent to which an answer is clearly expressed, is well-structured, leads to a conclusion that is consistent with the preceding knowledge and analysis and uses relevant political vocabulary, including theories and concepts, as identified in the mark scheme.

Topic 2: Political Parties

0 3 Consider the significance of ‘social conservatives’ in US politics. **[10 marks]**

For AO1 marks, students need to demonstrate that they clearly understand the concept of the social conservatism in US politics, especially in the Bible Belt, (expect reference to the religious or Christian right) and its links to the right wing of the Republican Party, using examples and evidence of its origins, and what it believes in and supports.

For high AO1 marks, students may refer to:

- Socially conservative views; pro-life on the abortion issue, and opposition to same-sex marriage and stem cell research.
- Social conservatives have been an important voting ‘base’ or core vote of the Republican Party in elections since 1980.
- The growing concern within the Tea party for social issues alongside the significance it places on fiscal conservatism.
- The influence of some of its supporters and spokespersons, such as Newt Gingrich, Sarah Palin, Pat Robertson, Rick Santorum, Ben Carson and the Christian right broadcasting channels and links to evangelical Christianity.

For AO2 marks, students must address the ‘significance’ part of the question. It may be argued that social conservatives were very important in explaining the success of the Republican Party in the 1980–90s and G W Bush in 2004, with campaigns geared to win support of this group of voters and a focus on socially conservative policies and values (Faith, Flag and Family and God, Gays and Guns). At the highest level of response expect students to refer to the influence of the Tea party and its influence on the Republican Party since 2009, pushing it further to the right with a more fiscally and socially conservative ideology.

On the other hand, some students may argue that the influence of social conservative ideas has waned (as it did under the Clinton administration) with the election of Obama in 2008 and his re-election in 2012. There is also evidence that the views of the social conservatives can alienate moderate Republican and independent voters (particularly female and young voters), as seen with Todd Akin, Republican candidate from Missouri and his remark that "legitimate rape" rarely causes pregnancy from 2012.

0 4 ‘In spite of the diversity of the USA, third parties and independent candidates have failed to break the electoral domination of the Democrat and Republican parties.’
Discuss.

[30 marks]

The question focuses on the continuing contradiction 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. Students are likely to describe this diversity in terms of 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. However, a detailed description of diversity should not dominate a response. The focus of the answer should be on the reasons why the two parties are so strong and long lasting. 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 which has existed since the nineteenth century.
- 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 enjoyed by the two parties in terms of contributions from PACs and Super PACs.
- 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.
- Lack of ballot access.
- Lack of media attention.

It is also likely that Level 3 and 4 responses may challenge the idea of the two main parties dominating the system by referring to independent 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, (Joe Lieberman in Connecticut, now retired) and Angus King in Maine. Students may also make the point that Sanders and King regularly caucus with the Democrats in the Senate. Moreover, 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.

AO3 marks on this question must be awarded to reflect the extent to which an answer is clearly expressed, is well structured, leads to a conclusion that is consistent with the preceding knowledge and analysis and uses relevant political vocabulary, including theories and concepts, as identified in the mark scheme.

Topic 3: Voting Behaviour

0 5 Consider the importance of race and ethnicity as factors influencing US voting behaviour. **[10 marks]**

Race is 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 race of the voter, largely because of the different values and expectations associated with different voting racial groups. There are some very clear differences, seen in all recent elections – mid-term and presidential – to demonstrate that voters in different racial groups distribute their support differently. For AO1 marks some of the following evidence can be expected:

- The black vote has been overwhelmingly Democratic whilst white voters are more likely to vote Republican.
- Reasons for the high black vote for the Democrats include their greater commitment to civil rights, affirmative action and welfare spending to support poorer minorities.
- The white vote is less “solidaristic” than the black vote.
- The Hispanic vote is a section of the US electorate, Spanish-speaking and Catholic, often labelled the ‘Sleeping Giant’ of US voting behaviour. Their concentration in several vital swing states such as Nevada, Colorado and New Mexico and states with high EC votes such as Florida, make them an important group of voters. They are likely to be described as important ‘swing voters’ in elections, especially over social issues such as abortion/same-sex marriage, which attracted more social conservative Hispanics to the Republicans in 2004 (up to 44% of the vote). However, their vote was 67% for Obama in 2008 and 71% in 2012, attracted back to the Democrats as the party of minority rights, welfare and supporters of the ‘Dream Act’ allowing for naturalisation, e.g. Obama’s Executive Order on citizenship for young Hispanics in 2012, before the presidential election.

For high AO2 marks expect analysis of the *reasons* for different voting patterns based on race. Some students may argue that race wins elections – in 1968 Richard Nixon was elected president in part because of his use of the Southern strategy which was designed to draw white Southern voters away from the Democratic Party. By the 1990s Bill Clinton was winning more than 80% of the black vote. Unsurprisingly, Barack Obama harnessed even more support, winning 95% of the black vote in 2008 and 93% in 2012.

At the highest levels of response students may argue the white vote is already less significant than ever before. Mitt Romney won 59% of white votes and yet lost the election. There is an important demographic shift taking place in America. If current trends continue, whites may no longer be in a majority by 2043. America will become a ‘majority-minority’ nation, in which minorities together make up the majority of the population. This presents Democrats with the opportunity of a larger support base, and Republicans with the challenge of reaching out to minority voters in order to achieve electoral success.

At the highest level of response students may conclude that race is simply one factor among many that influence Voting Behaviour and that it is very hard to disentangle race

as a factor from *other* influencing factors such as socio-economic status, age and gender. However, do not reward responses that stray into other social factors effecting voting behaviour. The focus of the response must be on race and ethnicity.

0 6 Discuss the reasons for the high abstention levels at US elections.

[30 marks]

This question invites students to address the debate over the **causes** of high abstention in US elections. Students should recognise that turnout in US elections is not static but fluctuates from one election to the next (turnout has been between 49% and 63% in presidential elections since the 1970s). They should be able to identify the fact that the overall trend in turnout is down but that it reached its lowest point in 1996 but has fluctuated in more recent elections (2008 [62%] and 2012 [58%]). The question allows students to contrast presidential elections with other types of election and develop the point that turnout can vary according to the type of election, some may also point to the fact that there are regional differences in turnout. This is a valid approach and should be credited but it should not dominate a response. Evidence that could be offered by students includes:

- mid-term elections where turnout is usually between 30 and 40% (36% 2014 mid-terms)
- primary elections where turnout hovers between 20 and 30%.

The question allows students to discuss a range of reasons that might explain high abstention, the best responses will be characterised by the depth of analysis and convincing statistical evidence.

Students may present an argument suggesting that the frequency and number of US elections (**democratic-overload**) 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**. Students may wish to discuss partisan de-alignment, the rise of independent voters responding to different issues and different candidates, the changing nature of American electoral campaigns and campaigning techniques such as the growth of negative campaigning and 'attack ads' which are alienating too many voters and may depress turnout. With reference to the more recent elections, students should be aware of the numerous factors explaining differing levels of turnout in each one with reference to the candidates or issues. 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.

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. This point could be linked to the fact that turnout is higher in same-day registration states. 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.

Students 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. Students may wish to also make links between voter registration, race and turnout. Level 3 and 4 responses may refer to how some states are currently changing their registration practices. There may also be reference to the

Supreme Court decision in *Shelby County v Holder* and links to the Voting Rights Act 1965. The act forced nine states with a legacy of racism to get approval from the US government before changing their voting practices, with a view to preventing discrimination against black voters. However, the Supreme Court ruled that the list of states, which was first drawn up in the 1965 was outdated and unconstitutional.

High Level 3 and 4 responses may refer to the fact that turnout figures are not wholly accurate because of problems with registration and polling in several states, or that turnout is likely to rise if voters perceive that a **real** contest is likely especially in the 'swing states' as opposed to the 'safe states' as in 2004 and 2008 compared to 1996 and 2000. Responses will be distinguished by the evidence presented by students of **the issues** and **candidates** that differ in each election which can work to **increase** or **reduce** turnout.

AO3 marks on this question must be awarded to reflect the extent to which an answer is clearly expressed, is well-structured, leads to a conclusion that is consistent with the preceding knowledge and analysis and uses relevant political vocabulary, including theories and concepts, as identified in the mark scheme.

Topic 4: Pressure Groups

0 7 Explain the importance of Political Action Committees in US politics.

[10 marks]

For AO1 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. In recent elections they have contributed greatly to 'issue advocacy' campaigns, advertising 'on behalf of' candidates. PACs can be characterised as being very pragmatic, donating to candidates who will win, which means they support incumbents over challengers.
- They are restricted in the amount of money they can give to candidates but there are 'loopholes' such as 'bundling' contributions.

The role of PACs is controversial, with debates over their effect on US politics. Thus the 'importance' of the role of PACs should also be addressed. For higher AO2 marks, analysis should cover areas such as:

- Their increasing significance because of the FECA restrictions on political money since the 1970s left a 'funding gap' which they filled. Excellent responses may refer to the growth of Leadership PACs although this is not necessary for high Level 3 and 4 answers.
- The reliance on PAC money for many political candidates, especially congressional incumbents, helps reinforce the perceived links between PAC donations and the 'buying' of political influence (e.g. the NRA or the pro-Israel lobby). Good responses are likely to refer to arguments relating to a 'coin-operated Congress' where it is alleged you 'have to pay to play'.
- Excellent responses can be expected to refer to the significance of the Supreme Court ruling *FEC v Citizens United* (January 2010) on corporate and union donations which resulted in the emergence of so-called Super PACs. These PACs campaign for and against candidates but unlike traditional PACs, they cannot directly donate any hard money to candidates. It is possible but again not necessary that some students will refer to Obama's comments following the *Citizens United* decision in his 2010 State of the Union address, when he condemned the ruling saying 'I believe it will open the floodgates for special interests...' It is also possible that some students will also refer to the *McCutcheon v FEC* (April 2014) ruling which further strengthened Super PACs, this is not necessary for higher levels marks but can be expected from students with a high degree of synoptic understanding of pressure groups and campaign finance rules.

However, at the highest level of response students 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, 527s and '501(c)' fundraising groups may have lessened the significance of PAC funding in the US electoral process.

- 0 8** Analyse the reasons why some pressure groups are more successful than others within the US political system.

[30 marks]

Responses to this question must focus on the numerous variables involved in explaining the success (or lack of success) of US pressure groups. Students who remain focused on the explanations of why some groups are more successful than others with supporting evidence and examples are likely to access the higher mark levels. Students who write generically on US pressure groups with little focus on the precise question should be not rewarded beyond Level 2 for both AO1 and AO2.

To achieve Level 3 and 4 students should address 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.

For AO2 marks, students must address the ‘success’ part of the question. The following analysis (it is not necessary for all of the following to be addressed) is likely to be offered in responses:

- The extent of ‘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 (K-street), 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, e.g. testifying before congressional committees on highly specialised areas of policy.
- How far groups 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 decision *FEC v Citizens United 2010* leading to the creation of so-called Super PACs).
- Their membership – its size/financial contributions/commitment/involvement, e.g. NRA relatively small but highly 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’.

- Level 3 and 4 responses are likely to argue success can depend on which party controls the presidency or Congress and why the Democrats or Republicans might be sympathetic to 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.
- Higher Level responses should explain the formation of 'Iron Triangles' or 'Issue Networks' and relate this to 'success'.
- It is also possible that some students may 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. This approach should be given credit.

Overall, marks will relate to a student's focus on the issue of success and the extent of relevant examples of pressure group activities. Some students 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.

AO3 marks on this question must be awarded to reflect the extent to which an answer is clearly expressed, is well-structured, leads to a conclusion that is consistent with the preceding knowledge and analysis and uses relevant political vocabulary, including theories and concepts, as identified in the mark scheme.